

IT HAPPENED IN  
PALESTINE

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**TO**

**DIXON, KINGSLEY, AND MARGARET**

## P R E F A C E

RUSKIN, in his *Modern Painters*, points to one of the most fruitful devotional exercises I know. He describes it as an attempt “to be present, as if in the body, at each recorded event in the life of the Redeemer.” Nothing is more certain, in my own mind, than that Jesus’s personal friendship with men and women in the days of His flesh was the potent means of changing their lives and their entire outlook. It was not an elaborate ritual which He instituted ; it was not a creed which He taught ; it was not an elaborate organisation which He set moving. I am far from belittling any of these things, but, in my view, they are all secondary to the central experience of personal relationship with Christ, and, indeed, they all fall short of their purpose now, unless they make His friendship real, and set forth our communion with Him as the only thing that vitally matters.

I do not know where the reader may be whose eye catches these words, but let him close the book for a moment and imagine Jesus present, standing near Him, in the body. Let the reader then imagine Jesus coming with him into every part of the life of that day ; into his

## P R E F A C E

in another He spends literally hours in treatment.<sup>1</sup> Some modern methods of so-called "faith healing" forget that one can have faith without healing and healing without faith. They demand what is miscalled faith and put all the onus on the patient, cruelly concluding that if healing does not follow, the patient had no faith and, equally mistakenly, that if he is healed he had faith. Such methods find no support for their rough treatment, which does not vary as the nature of the case varies, in the careful methods of the Master which differed so widely with different patients. Modern healing missions sometimes forget that Jesus *always understood the psychological cause of the condition.*

In this book I have tried to share with the reader the privilege of visiting Palestine. I have tried to share any psychological insight I may have gathered into the minds of those who came into contact with Jesus and to show some of the inner meaning of the things He said and did. Above all, I hope the reader will "see Jesus." To watch Him working with men and women in Palestine long ago is to realise how He deals with men and women to-day, and how He will deal with us if we will let Him. It is my hope that the book may send the reader back to read his New Testament again with new eyes, and

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 73 ff.

## P R E F A C E

that from those hallowed pages there may step forth the ever-living Saviour and Lord, confronting, challenging, comforting, and healing as in the days of His flesh. For life begins again with new radiance, power, and meaning when Jesus comes alive. Things that happened in Palestine are no longer dull facts of past history, but shining facts of modern personal experience.

I cannot adequately express my thanks. My friends Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Appleyard of Leeds took me to Palestine with their two daughters, Margot and Joyce, and made me feel one of the family by a kindness which I can never repay. That trip fulfilled the dream of a lifetime for me.

My beloved father-in-law, the Rev. Arthur Triggs, has once more worked through the proofs and given me his invaluable counsel and help, which I greatly prize.

I am greatly indebted to my friend the famous antiquary, known to all students of the excavator's art, especially in Biblical lands, Mr. J. R. Ogden, J.P., F.S.A. He has read my MS. through and made many most helpful suggestions, which I have eagerly adopted. He has also greatly helped me in securing photographs.

I have thought it wise to have the book read by one who has just returned from Palestine

## P R E F A C E

lest any of my two-year-old impressions should prove inaccurate, and my friend and successor, the Rev. W. E. Sangster, B.A., has kindly done this for me.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to my friend Miss Lorna Shirley Smith, who has corrected the proofs, made most helpful suggestions, and contributed some valuable photographs which she herself took in Palestine.

Mr. Harold Shepstone has provided some excellent photographs, for which I am grateful. A few of the photographs are my own.

My wife has finally checked the proofs and helped me prepare the book for the press. I must mention my two former secretaries, who both helped in typing and other detailed work Miss E. M. Bailey and Mr. Philip Found. Mr. Leonard Cutts, of the firm of Hodder & Stoughton, has been as courteous, efficient, and on-the-spot as ever. I have found it hard to live up to his business-like promptitude, and the delayed publication is due to the pressure of my other work.

Help of other kinds is mentioned in footnotes throughout the book. Where psychological cases have been quoted, unimportant details have been altered in order to protect the patients. I have again taken the liberty of using the word "patient" because it seems the

## P R E F A C E

least unsuitable word. Perhaps it is well to explain that I have used the names "Matthew" and "John" to denote the writers of the First and Fourth Gospels. I am aware of the controversy raging still on this matter of authorship, but it seemed too pedantic and confusing to write "the editor of the First Gospel," or "the author of the Fourth Gospel," in every case.

LESLIE D. WEATHERHEAD.

THE CITY TEMPLE,  
LONDON.

*Advent, 1936.*

# CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
PREFACE . . . . .	vii
I. AT BETHLEHEM . . . . .	I
II. AT NAZARETH . . . . .	15
III. BY THE LAKE-SIDE . . . . .	27
IV. AT CANA OF GALILEE . . . . .	41
V. AT CAPERNAUM . . . . .	55
VI. IN THE COUNTRY OF THE GERAENES . . . . .	71
VII. AGAIN AT CAPERNAUM . . . . .	93
VIII. AT MAGDALA . . . . .	107
IX. AT BETHESDA . . . . .	125
X. AT JACOB'S WELL . . . . .	143
XI. AT TYRE . . . . .	161
XII. AT JERICHO . . . . .	177
XIII. AT CÆSAREA PHILIPPI . . . . .	193
XIV. AT BETHANY . . . . .	213
XV. AT JERUSALEM . . . . .	229
XVI. IN GETHSEMANE . . . . .	243
XVII. AT GOLGOTHA . . . . .	257
XVIII. IN THE GARDEN OF THE RESURRECTION . . . . .	273

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	FACING PAGE
AT TYRE : General view . . . . .	165
AT TYRE : Ruins of the Crusader Church . . . . .	172
AT JERICHO : The wild country lying off the Jericho Road . . . . .	181
AT JERICHO : The Good Samaritan's Inn . . . . .	184
AT JERICHO : The walls of the ancient city as now excavated . . . . .	188
AT CÆSAREA PHILIPPI : Northern pastures . . . . .	197
AT CÆSAREA PHILIPPI : An ancient sheepfold . . . . .	200
AT CÆSAREA PHILIPPI : Drinking the water of the Jordan . . . . .	204
AT CÆSAREA PHILIPPI : A shrine of Pan in the cliff face at the birthplace of the Jordan . . . . .	209
AT BETHANY : Bethany from the main road . . . . .	216
AT BETHANY : Bethany from the slopes of Olivet . . . . .	224
AT JERUSALEM : Early morning market scene at the Damascus Gate . . . . .	231
AT JERUSALEM : The Wailing Wall . . . . .	234
IN GETHSEMANE : The Mount of Olives . . . . .	245
IN GETHSEMANE : Jerusalem as seen from beneath an olive tree near Gethsemane . . . . .	248
IN GETHSEMANE : Old Olives . . . . .	252
AT GOLGOTHA : Via Dolorosa . . . . .	261
AT GOLGOTHA : Rome, looking across the Tiber towards St. Peter's . . . . .	264
AT GOLGOTHA : The Cross erected in the Colosseum, Rome, to mark the spot where Christian martyrs were thrown to lions . . . . .	268
THE GARDEN OF THE RESURRECTION : Exterior of the Garden Tomb . . . . .	280

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	<i>Frontispiece</i>
THE SEA OF GALILEE . . . . .	<i>Facing Page</i>
AT BETHLEHEM : "The Shepherds' Field" . . . . .	5
AT BETHLEHEM : Entrance to the Church of the Nativity . . . . .	8
AT BETHLEHEM : A Woman of Bethlehem . . . . .	12
AT NAZARETH : View, showing in the distance the Hill of Precipitation . . . . .	21
AT NAZARETH : A Carpenter working with his hands and feet . . . . .	24
BY THE LAKE-SIDE : A glimpse of Galilee . . . . .	28
BY THE LAKE-SIDE : The entrance to the "Way of the Sea" . . . . .	32
BY THE LAKE-SIDE : Fishing in the Lake . . . . .	35
BY THE LAKE-SIDE : A storm on the Sea of Galilee . . . . .	37
AT CANA OF GALILEE : General View . . . . .	44
AT CANA OF GALILEE : The Well of Cana . . . . .	46
AT CAPERNAUM : Part of the Synagogue as it is being reconstructed by the Franciscans . . . . .	64
AT CAPERNAUM : The beach near Capernaum where Jesus called Peter and Andrew . . . . .	69
THE COUNTRY OF THE GERAENES . . . . .	76
AT MAGDALA : View on the shores of the Lake . . . . .	113
AT BETHESDA : The Pool of Bethesda as it appears to-day . . . . .	128
AT JACOB'S WELL . . . . .	152

**CHAPTER I**

**AT BETHLEHEM**

## CHAPTER I

### AT BETHLEHEM

WHAT magic there is in the word “Bethlehem”! All over the world, wherever Christian people celebrate Christmas, this word carries its magic into human hearts. We all interpret it according to our own nationality and temperament and make-up. Just as Leonardo da Vinci painted his picture of “The Last Supper” with an Italian table on which Italian rolls were set for those who should eat, so we picture Bethlehem according to English tradition and custom.

A wide hillside on a glittering frosty night. The moon high in the sky in a setting of fleecy clouds. Shepherds, wrapped in heavy mantles and blankets, crouching over a fire, trying to keep warm. And near them sheep huddled together for warmth in some rude fold open to the sky. Then the angels. The sky filled with their luminous presence ; and the shepherds lifting half-incredulous, wonder-stricken faces upward to see them. Then the majestic voices. “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among the men of goodwill.” It is not difficult to picture that.

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## AT BETHLEHEM.

“ The Shepherds’ Field,” showing Bethlehem in the distance.

*Photo : American Colony, Jerusalem.*



## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

of his relatives still lived there. If this were so, we can more easily understand why the Holy Family stayed there nearly two years when their home and business were in Nazareth, and they only needed to come to Bethlehem for the census. Our evidence for the long period is, of course, that the massacre of the innocents, ordered by Herod, was a massacre of all male children, *of two years old and under.*<sup>1</sup> I have sometimes wondered whether the strange circumstances of the birth, which earlier had made Joseph consider putting Mary “away privily,”<sup>2</sup> made him shy of returning quickly to Nazareth where gossiping tongues would be so busy concerning Mary’s child. To neglect a business for two years requires a fairly strong reason in the case of a comparatively poor man.

Look at the inside of a Bethlehem house. You go in on the street level to one big room, the floor of which is just the earth, beaten down hard. Two-thirds of the room are on the ground level. One-third, at the farther end, is raised up eighteen inches or two feet high. On this kind of daïs the family lives. Here is the oven, the baby’s hammock, the lamp-stand, the sleeping-mats. Here the family has its meals. The lower level is used to house the animals at night so that they are safe from robbers. A donkey,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. ii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. i. 19.

## A T BETHLEHEM

a cow, a goat or two, or even sheep, a few dogs, and hens. The inside of an Eastern house at night when the doors are shut is warm even if smelly !

The kindly host of the guest-house, or the relatives, would willingly have offered Joseph and Mary mats in the sleeping part of the house, on the raised daïs at the end. To be able to establish relationship, in the East, is practically to be able to command hospitality as long as it is needed. In the East, even more than in the West, a man who can afford help and hospitality soon finds how many " relatives " he has. Unfortunately on this occasion what we have called the daïs is already full because of the enrolment.<sup>1</sup> But the host does offer them the lower part, under the same roof. No doubt he put down clean straw on the floor, and gathered mats, and made Mary as comfortable as possible. The manger, of course, stood, or was fixed, in this part of the house, or was actually part of the division between the upper and lower part of the room, and it is the mention of the manger which has made people suppose that Jesus was born in a barn or stable. But there is no mention of a barn or stable in relation to the birth of Christ in the whole of Scripture.

Bethlehem is only six miles south of Jeru-

<sup>1</sup> Luke ii. 1-5.

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

salem. Going towards Bethlehem you pass along a ridge and look down into a valley on your left filled with smiling fields of corn. "The valleys stand so thick with corn that even they are singing." This corn gives to Bethlehem its name, which means, The House of Bread. Here, too, are the grassy meadows where David, a thousand years earlier, watched sheep and guarded them from the attack of the lion and the bear.<sup>1</sup> Bethlehem is "royal David's city." Somewhere down in that valley, perhaps, David slew Goliath.<sup>2</sup> Somewhere near this spot, the mighty men who loved David broke through the ranks of the Philistines to bring him water from the well of Bethlehem at such risk to themselves that, to David, the water had become the wine of blood. He felt unworthy to drink it, and in an act full of spiritual insight he "poured it out unto the Lord," offering it to the God who is alone worthy of such a selfless offering. In fitting language and with fitting restraint the story is told.<sup>3</sup>

Bethlehem is a city set on a hill. It is a peaceful and attractive little town with white, flat-roofed houses, nestling close together and giving one the impression of a toy town, made by a child with a lot of little white boxes. Most of its streets are narrow, so narrow that no car

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. xvii. 34.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Sam. xvii.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Sam. xxiii. 17.

## AT BETHLEHEM

could traverse them. But Bethlehem seems friendly. One has no feeling of lurking evil such as is not uncommon in some narrow streets of Eastern towns at night. Why this is so I do not know. May it not be that Bethlehem is a Christian town? The proportion of Christians here is greater, I think, than in any other town in Palestine. Mohammedanism, so dominant in other parts of Palestine, is not so clamorous here. There is only one muezzin in the place.

Your guide would take you, of course, to the Church of the Holy Nativity. It was said to have been built in A.D. 330 by Queen Helena, mother of Constantine, the first Christian Emperor of Rome, and is the oldest Christian church in the world which is still used for worship and the only one which survived the innumerable invasions of Palestine. In A.D. 611 the Persians destroyed every Christian church in Palestine except this one. The story of how this site was preserved reveals incidents which can hardly be called accidents. Hadrian, for instance, determined to stamp out Christianity and profane the sacred sites, built a temple to Jupiter over the spot revered by Christians as that near which Jesus was born.<sup>1</sup> It only served, during many

<sup>1</sup> He built a temple to Venus over the site of the grave of our Lord. A stone from this Temple, discovered in 1924, is our strongest evidence for the site of the empty tomb. See chap. xviii.

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

stormy years, to ensure that the spot was marked in a more definite way than any which the Christians could have devised.

You enter the church by a low door, made low, some tell you, in order that you shall be forced to bow the head in adoration ; made low, others say, to prevent the Moslem riding in on horseback and slaying the worshippers ; made low, say yet others, to prevent travellers taking their beasts within, and making it a caravan-serai.

The church, a cold, austere, Roman basilica, with massive Corinthian pillars and gold mosaics still discernible on the walls, is not an unpleasing building. What hurts are the stories of quarrelling which the guide narrates. You are shown a limestone cave or grotto and told that Jesus was born in it. It may be so. The hill on which Bethlehem is built is all limestone, and it was a common practice, in the case of a house built into the hillside, to enlarge the house by excavating a cave in that part of the house where the hillside itself provided a wall. It is attractive to think so, for in such an excavated cave Mary may have had a little more privacy than otherwise was possible.

One bows in this small cave desiring to worship. The walls are covered with tapestry. The air is heavy with incense. The place is

## A T B E T H L E H E M

lighted by no less than fifty-three lamps tended by priests. It is hard to worship. True, a thrill passes through one when one is shown on the floor a large silver star and hears the priest say, "That is where Jesus Christ was born." Then one remembers that the removal of that star, years ago, led to a quarrel between France and Russia which became the Crimean War. Greeks and Armenians and Roman Catholics still quarrel for privileges within the sacred edifice. On one column are three nails. On one the Latins may hang a tapestry or picture. On another the Greeks may do the same. The third is a neutral nail on which no one may hang anything without precipitating a crisis which may become international. And always, at the place where the Prince of Peace was born, a policeman is on duty to deal with the quarrelling which so easily bursts forth.

For a Protestant, it is a joy to come out of the church into the warm, scented air. I can recall vividly the afternoon when we went from the church, down the hill to the field that is called the field of the shepherds. To our intense delight people were harvesting. There we saw a modern Boaz and Ruth harvesting and gleaning in the same spot immortalised in one of the loveliest idylls in the Bible, the Book of Ruth. Then we sat quietly and waited. I read aloud

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

the second chapter of Luke's gospel—the lovely story of the mother and child.

Slowly, as we sat there, the sun went down behind Bethlehem. I can shut my eyes now and see a graceful minaret standing out, black against a daffodil sky. A shepherd passed us by on the road, leading his flock—a mixed one, I remember, of sheep and goats. Tremblingly stars stole into the sky. A mystic hush fell upon us. Anything might have happened. The angels might have come down on soundless wing through the still air of that summer evening.

Then a voice, clear and musical. The muezzin calling the faithful to prayer. A bell "stumbled on sudden music and was still." Slowly the darkness fell. Night, like some great mother, hushed the earth to sleep and rest. Lights twinkled in Bethlehem. A voice called. Far away a dog barked. Then all was still. It was night.

In some moods the mind is impatient of questions. Was it really here or there? Was He really incarnate God? Did the angels really come? Can men really follow a star from far-off lands? Was that birth really a miracle?

It was sufficient for us that night to meditate in silence on what is unassailable. Somewhere



AT BETHLEHEM.

A Woman of Bethlehem.

*Photo : American Colony, Jerusalem.*



## A T BETHLEHEM

near where we were sitting in silent meditation, Jesus Christ was born, perhaps on a night like that, full of mystery and magic and moonlight. And because of that birth every life in the world has been affected. Because of that night there has never been an utterly dark night since.

Unto all peoples of the earth,  
A little child brought light ;  
And never in the darkest place  
Can it be utter night.

No flickering torch, no wavering fire,  
But Light, the Life of men ;  
Whatever clouds may veil the sky,  
Never is night again.<sup>1</sup>

No, never ! No life can ever be lived again on earth as though Jesus Christ had never lived. Bethlehem has altered everything. The solid foundations of Christianity lie there immovable, a fact of history which none can deny.

My own visit to Palestine resulted in that outstanding impression. I have lived and travelled in other Eastern countries. I lived in India for some years, long enough to study other religions closely. But when I look for the historic basis of Indian religions I do not find the solidity I find in Christ. I find legend, myth, story.

<sup>1</sup> Lilian Cox.

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

But Christianity is based on a life lived in places which still may be visited. We have the witness of pagan historians, Trajan, Pliny, Tacitus, Josephus. A life was begun at Bethlehem which changed other lives and is changing the face of the world, and would change ours if we would let His baby fingers pull down our stubborn necks as low as His manger and let His loving spirit fill our hearts. The critic may argue as he likes, and use the divisions of Christendom as the object of his easy scorn. But in one thing all Churches agree. A life was begun in Bethlehem which offers to all men the key to the problem of the art of living, an art all men seek to practise and He alone mastered. The records of that life have been subjected to the most rigid criticism and enquiry. The white light of nearly two thousand years of scholarship has beaten upon the records, and not only do they bear the scrutiny, but out of the pages leaps the figure of a living Man. Every age of criticism but releases Him more completely from the fetters in which He has been held down, and reveals Him the most knowable, lovable of all the sons of men ; the Son of God who became the Son of Man that we, even we, might become the sons of God.

O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord !

**CHAPTER II**

**A T NAZARETH**

## CHAPTER II

### AT NAZARETH

IMAGINE yourself standing on the summit of Mount Tabor. It is not a high mountain—only nineteen hundred feet. Yet from its topmost peak, on a clear day, you can get a bird's-eye view of almost the whole of Palestine, for Tabor rises sheer on every side. Palestine is a far smaller land than one imagines from reading the Bible. To take one instance. Hannah lived at Ramah, from which she took her son Samuel to Shiloh and left him there with Eli. We read that she visited him only once a year,<sup>1</sup> and we imagine that a vast distance separated them. She could have got to him in half an hour in a car. The distance was fifteen miles. In a good car you could go from Dan to Beersheba between breakfast and tea. Palestine is about the size of Wales. From the top of Tabor you can see, looking north, the Sea of Galilee, and beyond it Hermon, rising majestically nine thousand feet into heaven and crowned with snow. Looking south you can see the mountains east of the Dead Sea. Looking east are

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. ii. 18-19.

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

Gilead and the hills of Transjordania and the mountains of Moab. Moses, his eye undimmed by age, must quite literally have been able to see almost the whole of the "Promised Land" from the heights of Nebo.<sup>1</sup> Looking west, you may catch from Tabor the sparkle of the Mediterranean, and the ridge with Mount Carmel at its northern end.

North-west, nestling below the top of a ridge of hills, which rise to the north of the plain of Esdraelon, you see from Tabor the white houses of Nazareth, only five and a half miles away. Jesus loved the out-of-doors. He was a young man who lived at Nazareth. It is almost certain that He climbed to the top of Tabor and revelled in this view of the land He loved. One can imagine Him reconstructing the scenes which His Bible, the Old Testament, had made familiar. On the very slopes of Tabor, Deborah and Barak gathered their forces and dashed upon Sisera and his army.<sup>2</sup> In full view is Gilboa and the battlefield where Gideon defeated the Midianites, and where both Saul and Jonathan died.<sup>3</sup> Endor is visible from Tabor, where Saul went to consult the famous medium who called up the spirit of Samuel.<sup>4</sup>

Nazareth is all that you could wish, except

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxxiv. 1, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Judges iv. 4-16.

<sup>3</sup> Judges vii. ; 1 Sam. xxxi. 1-13.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Sam. xxviii. 7-25.

## A T N A Z A R E T H

for the beggars. Why they seem more clamorous here I have never been able to decide, and the children are the worst, so that, if the children surrounded Jesus in any way as they surrounded us, then one has some sympathy with the "stern disciples" who "drove them back" !

When you get to Nazareth your guide is certain to try to take you to see the Church of the Annunciation, built over the alleged site of Mary's house, and the Church of St. Joseph, built over the supposed site of the house of the Holy Family. If your time is limited you will not wish to spend too much of it in viewing these two churches or in listening to the stories of the guide. The chief interest to me in the latter building was the fact that a lot of little Nazareth boys were sitting receiving instruction from a grey-bearded old man with a most kindly face and radiant smile, and I found myself searching the faces of the boys in front of him to see if I could see Jesus.

I wanted to see three things in Nazareth. The famous fountain, now called the Virgin's Fountain, the hill-top behind the town to which Jesus must often have climbed, and a carpenter's shop.

The fountain is still there, and there is little doubt that all the inhabitants of Nazareth came to it from time immemorial, for it is the only

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

fountain in the town. Nazareth is spoilt by its modernisms. There is a hideous iron paling in front of it, and the women and girls who visit it, more frequently carry empty petrol tins in which to fetch the water than the picturesque water-pots of old. But if you pick up a water-pot and then an empty petrol tin and note the difference in weight, you can understand the preference for petrol tins.

However, you can still make a picture of a woman walking to the well in the cheerful brightness of a summer dawn, and see, in imagination, a little Fellow trudging behind her ; One who one day will be worshipped and adored by wise and learned people throughout the world, a Child greater than all kings, whose name shall never perish and whose glory shall never grow dim.

Go up now to the hills behind the town. On the summit of one is a hospital run by a Presbyterian Mission and doing a very valuable work. But walk over the neighbouring hills unspoilt as yet by the builder. If you know von Lenbach's picture, "The Shepherd Boy," hold that in your mind. And then lie full length on the ground. You are lying where Jesus lay and thought the long, long thoughts of youth. If the season is right, there are lovely wild flowers all round you, anemones and cyclamen ; or, later,

## AT NAZARETH.

View of Nazareth, showing in the distance the Hill of Precipitation down which the rulers of the synagogue intended to hurl Jesus.

(Luke iv. 28-30.)

*Photo : Miss Shirley Smith.*





## A T N A Z A R E T H

poppies and scabious, or, later still, just the tawny grass and camel thorn and some marvellous blue thistles with fine big heads. You are lying where, perhaps, it first came home to Jesus that God cared for flowers and birds ; that He had taken pains with the dress of each of the hill grasses that were gathered and thrust into the oven for fuel and that the “ meanest flower that blows ” was better dressed than Solomon.

Then what a view ! The Nazareth ridge is sixteen hundred and fifty feet above sea-level, and Nazareth, which has houses built at an altitude of fifteen hundred feet, is at the lowest point. From Nazareth Jesus could see the sea. It was only fifteen miles away, and, though we have no record of it, one can be practically certain that He frequently visited it and plunged into it. The thought that the boy Jesus probably enjoyed sea-bathing gave me a great thrill when it dawned on me as I walked the hills above Nazareth.

From Nazareth also He could see the great caravan routes. As He lay on those grassy hills, His chin cupped in His hands, He would see the long camel-caravans come plodding along in the valley below Him, between Him and the sea. These caravans travelled from Damascus and Baghdad in the east, to the port of Cæsarea in the west, and on even to Egypt far away south-

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

west. Across that valley Jesus could see Sepphoris, only three miles away. You can still see its ruins.

When Jesus was twelve years old a terrible thing happened there. Judas the Galilean gathered together the hot-blooded young men of Galilee into a nationalist revolt against Rome. "No king but God," was their cry. Ten thousand young patriots, headed by Judas, gathered at Sepphoris, swept into Tiberias, broke into the royal armoury, and armed themselves in readiness for a struggle to free Palestine from the Roman yoke. The Roman general, Varus, put himself at the head of his trained legions, each consisting of six thousand men, and the untrained Galileans broke and ran. Varus marched on Sepphoris, the headquarters of the rebellion, surrounded it, and set fire to the town. It is practically certain that Jesus watched Sepphoris burning from the hill above Nazareth. But Varus also herded the boys and girls, and men and women together, dragging them from their peaceful pursuits, and drove them over the hills to the coast and sent them over the sea to slavery. Two thousand of the young rebels Varus crucified on crosses set up on the hillsides near Jesus's home. Who made these crosses? Who but the carpenters of the neighbourhood? It is more than likely

## A T NAZARETH

that under the direction of some Roman non-commissioned officer Joseph was compelled to make a cross. And a Boy of twelve, with sorrowful heart and with big brown eyes, shining with unshed tears, looked on.

I wanted very much to see a carpenter's shop in Nazareth. It is not known whether Joseph's workshop was adjoining, or even part of, the house, or whether it was in the bazaar. To-day the carpenters' shops are mostly in the bazaar, but we do not know if it were so in the time of Jesus. Carpenters still use the same kind of tools. The type of saw used is what, I believe, is now called a band-saw. The carpenter works seated for some of this work, and holds the wood down with his naked feet.

But I saw something far more thrilling than the carpenter's shop in Palestine. As we emerged at the top of the bazaar men were building a house. The walls were only a few feet up, made of the white rough stone which abounds in the neighbourhood. A carpenter was engaged, some ten feet from the ground, in fixing beams in position. A boy about twelve or fourteen was standing with a long piece of wood under his right arm, ready to pass it up to his father working above him. I can see him now, head thrown back, eyes smiling, with the sun shining on his face. Only a Jewish boy,

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

yet in that very town, in such a setting, looking upon such a scene, men saw the Son of Man.

Within the home He watched His mother bake bread, mend garments, sweep the house, light the lamp, wash the cup and platter, salt the fish. He "served His parents dear at Nazareth." He had such love and reverence for His earthly father that He could teach the whole world to pray to God and say, "Our Father."

Outside He watched men ploughing the earth, sowing corn, and later reaping it. He watched the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, the flowers and grasses, the shepherd with his sheep. He felt the wind blowing where it listeth.

In the loveliest mind in the world all these things were lessons, lessons of even greater value than those taught by the kind-faced Rabbi in the village school, lessons which all taught Him truths about men and truths about God; and all that He learned, God would use in His own good time.

And since Jesus was nearly twenty years in a carpenter's shop, it is one of the messages of Nazareth that we are to be so sensitive to the voice of God, so ready to do His will, that if He leaves us in what we call a backwater, forgotten, and chafing against the limitations of our task in life, we are to be faithful in the little things, knowing that God will ultimately use all that



## AT NAZARETH.

A Carpenter working with his hands and feet.

*Photo by kind permission of the Commissioner for Palestine, B.E.E.*

[See page 23.]



## AT NAZARETH

we have potential within us, and that to the faithful not an hour need be wasted. Life is bound to hold ultimate fulfilment for everybody at last or it would be unworthy of the God who planned it.

But there is another lesson. Even in that cramped life God was everything. Jesus could not live without God. At twelve, discovered in the Temple, He says to His mother, worried because she has missed Him, " Didn't you know that I simply have to be in the things of My Father ? " It was always, " My Father."

Look at this imaginary picture.<sup>1</sup> The day's work is done. The shop is shut. Jesus is off, as soon as He can, through the narrow, winding, insanitary streets, to the hills behind the town. A glorious sunset thrills Him to the depths of His being. Great inky clouds come up from the east. There is the rumble of thunder. Still He lies among the grasses, watching the colours slowly dying in the western sky. How marvellous are the works of His Father !

Mary is getting anxious. " Where is Jesus? " she asks. Joseph seeks to reassure her. " Oh, He'll be back soon." Dusk falls. The thunder growls like some menacing beast. It is almost dark. Then the rain comes down in torrents,

<sup>1</sup> This imaginary picture was broadcast in a sermon from St. Martin-in-the-Fields, and is included here by permission of the British Broadcasting Corporation.

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

lashing the village street. Lightning flashes vividly. "Oh, where is He? I do wish He'd come." Mary is in tears. Then the sound of running, naked feet, the click of the latch. A boy, shaking the rain out of His curls, dashes in, His eyes shining. He sees the dismay in His mother's face. "Why, mummy, whatever is the matter?"

"Oh, my dear, wherever have you been?"

"Why, up on the hills, mother, where I always go. You weren't worried?"

"But, my dear, weren't you afraid? Robbers and wolves are about at night. Then the storm came. Weren't you afraid of the lightning and the rain? . . ."

"But no, mummy, why should I be frightened? *My Father was there.*"

With Jesus it was always, "My Father." Jesus could not make sense of life without God. Most of us admit that His was the bravest, finest, holiest life the world has ever known. A life that fills the word "life" with new meaning, new significance, new beauty. We could scarcely meet anyone who would not agree that the world would be another place if we were all like Jesus, even if we were only a little bit like Him. Jesus, even from boyhood, could not live without God. Can you?

CHAPTER III  
BY THE LAKE-SIDE



## CHAPTER III

### BY THE LAKE-SIDE

THE first glimpse of the Sea of Galilee is an indescribable spiritual experience. The very word "Galilee," which means circle, is like beautiful music.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee !  
O calm of hills above,  
Where Jesus knelt to share with Thee  
The silence of Eternity,  
Interpreted by love !

Jesus, coming from Nazareth and moving eastward to Galilee, would pass along a valley, or series of valleys, called the Way of the Sea. When He passed the Horns of Hattin, from which some think He preached part of the Sermon on the Mount, and which is called by some the Mount of Beatitudes, He would see, towering above Him on either side of the defile, but especially on His right, the southern side, vast, high cliffs, honeycombed with caves, the immemorial haunt of robbers and bandits.

One does not need much imagination to think of the costly merchandise carried by

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

camels along this famous old route between east and west ; the wealth from Damascus and Baghdad passing west and that from Rome and Greece and Egypt passing east ; to see, imaginatively, the robbers rushing from their caves high up in the cliffs, hurling down the huge boulders that lie on the steep slopes, causing panic and dismay, and getting away with vast quantities of loot.

You may still wander through a labyrinth of these caves. They honeycomb the cliff face. Entering a cave, you may walk a long distance through weird, twisting tunnels leading up to higher galleries of more caves. There are spiral stairways which you traverse in pitch darkness, since they are cut through the solid rock, and from which you emerge on to a shelf, within a few feet of the edge of a sheer precipice of naked rock going down a thousand feet into the valley below.

There are no robbers there now. Wild doves fly out of the caves, alarmed at one's approach, and the gorge is sometimes called the Valley of Doves (Wadi el Hamam). But when Jesus walked that way the place was infested with robbers, and before His day that valley must have been the scene of many a wild scuffle. Indeed, Herod the Great found that Galilean rebels could hold up his whole army there.

## BY THE LAKE-SIDE

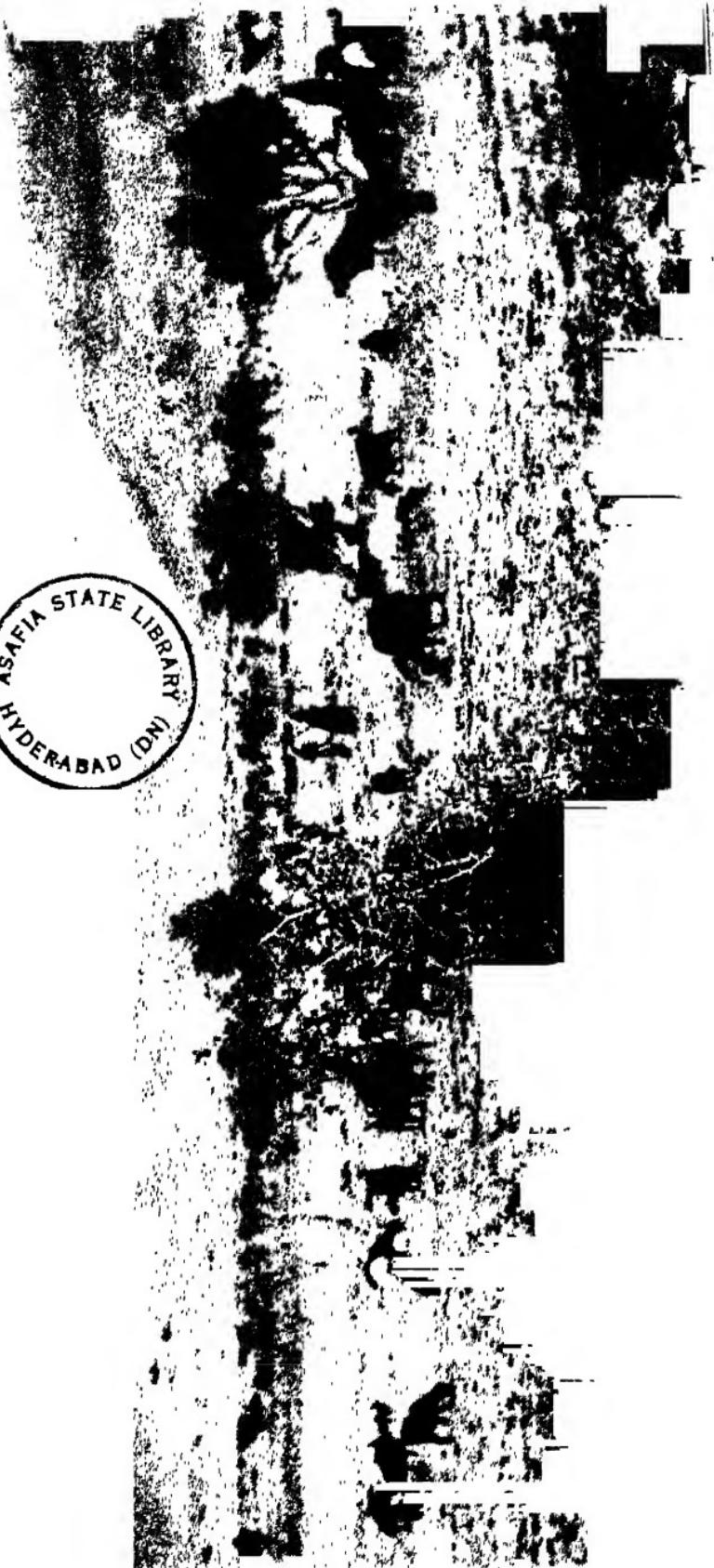
His soldiers could not track them down. So Herod made great cages, which he filled with soldiers, and, making a wide *détour*, let them down by strong cables from the top. When the cage was opposite a ledge or a cave, the soldiers thrust long iron hooks into the caves and pulled the rebels out and hurled them to death on the rocks below. Others, whom they could not thus reach, they smoked out. When the wretched rebels rushed out from the smoke, they ran on to the swords of Herod's soldiers, or they fell over the precipice edge to an equally certain death. Jesus would walk down the valley and look up at the caves and remember the stirring stories and pray for the day when all wild heroisms should be directed to the enterprises of peace and the building up of His Father's Kingdom.

Journeying from Nazareth, then, as He did, towards Genessaret, you turn a corner in the wild glen, and there, lying before you, is the Lake of Galilee, as blue and beautiful as your dreams. It is pear-shaped; only twelve or fourteen miles long and seven across at the broadest point, and it lies seven hundred feet below the level of the Mediterranean. It is this great depth, together with the gullies which funnel the wind into it from the east, which makes it so subject to sudden storms. The

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

cold currents from snowy Hermon rush down to displace the heated air rising over the sea. The cold air passes through such narrow gorges as to produce the effect of blowing hard on a bowl of water with a pipette. The speed with which a storm can gather on Galilee is almost incredible. We went in a motor-boat from Tiberias, on the western shore, to Gergesa on the eastern shore. On the way out the sea was so smooth that "surf-riding" on a board pulled by the motor-boat was possible. On the way back, though we did not stay an hour, not only was surf-riding unthinkable but we were drenched with the spray from the waves. I have read an account of a traveller who says that at one moment the sea was quite calm and that *within twenty minutes* great waves were breaking and spray could be felt two hundred yards from the shore. Mr. Basil Mathews speaks of waves thirty feet high in sudden storms on Galilee.<sup>1</sup> The sea subsides with equal rapidity. I have often wondered whether, when Jesus said, "Peace, be still," He was speaking not to the waves but to the troubled hearts of His men, and that afterwards, when the records came to be written and divinity had come to be understood largely in terms of magic,

<sup>1</sup> *Life of Jesus*, p. 206.



## BY THE LAKE-SIDE.

The entrance to the “Way of the Sea,” or “Valley of Doves.” The gorge marks a famous old caravan route. Jesus passed along it on His way from Nazareth to Capernaum. The caves which robbers infested can be seen high on the left.

[See page 30.]

## BY THE LAKE-SIDE

His words were taken to have been applied to the water. I write this not, of course, to belittle His powers. No wise person, I think, will be ready to draw a hasty line between what Jesus could and could not do. But it seems to me more like Him, and more significant for ourselves, if the incident carries this interpretation.

There is now only one town on the lake-side, Tiberias. It was built by Herod Antipas and named as a tribute to the Emperor. That alone would not make it very popular with Jews. But when it was discovered that the town was built over an ancient cemetery, orthodox Jews decided at once that it could not be lived in without ceremonial defilement. It is said that a subsidy had to be granted to get people to live there. Since the better class would not settle there, Tiberias became a sink of the off-scourings of the world.

Nowadays, I fear, many people would require a subsidy to live there, though Dr. Christie lived and laboured there for twenty years. We visited it, it is true, just after a cloud-burst, when lives had been lost and much damage done, but the little town of less than five thousand inhabitants seemed rather an unpleasant and unhealthy little Eastern town, though its main hotel offers much in the way of compensation.

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

Jesus never went there. Dr. G. A. Smith thinks this was because He was less at home with courtiers and officials than among simpler people, but this reason seems hardly like Jesus.

Yet let us try to remember that when Jesus lived on the lake-side it was not as it is now. Now it is as lonely as a Highland loch and scarcely a sail is to be seen on it. In Jesus's day the lake-side was what we should call an industrial area, with at least ten towns on the coast, each one of them having not less than fifteen thousand inhabitants. There were two hundred and five cities, towns, and villages in the area known as Galilee, and it was in the filthy streets of such sordid little towns that the Son of God walked.

When you go to Galilee you must go farther north and stay near the site of ancient Bethsaida at a German hostel called Tabghah. Tabghah means seven springs. Warm springs of water run into the lake, with a result which we shall soon see. The German hostel is a place of transcendent beauty. In its gardens flourish banana trees, pomegranates, oranges, and figs. There are huge eucalyptus trees, forming a wood which runs along the lake-side. Daily we wandered through the wood, disturbing the turtles sleeping at the edge of the pools or the harmless snakes writhing through the water.

BY THE LAKE-SIDE.

Fishing in the Lake.

[*See page 37*



## BY THE LAKE-SIDE

Daily we bathed at this point in the Lake of Galilee.

Father Täpper, who is in charge of this hostel and the missionary work among the Arabs of the neighbourhood, is a beautiful character, saintly and jolly. He told us many stories which thrilled us, and among them this : One evening at dinner he suddenly said, "Do you know what you are eating ?" We stopped immediately as one does at such a question. It was the fish course, but we had no idea what fish it was. "It is called St. Peter's fish," said our host.

But the thrill was to come, for he proceeded to explain that this was the fish to which Jesus referred when, in the controversy about the temple tax, He said, "Go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up ; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money : that take and give unto them for thee and Me." The tax was half a shekel, and half a shekel is as big as an English two-shilling piece.

Now the curious thing is that the mouth of this fish, the musht, is so big that a coin could easily be placed within it. Father Täpper says he has seen the fish carrying its spawn in its huge mouth and the young fish also. They fly to the parent's mouth as a place of escape

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

from danger. But, of course, however big the mouth, one hardly expects to find a coin within it. Frankly, the story had always puzzled me. And the explanation sometimes given, that Jesus meant Peter to catch a fish, sell it, and thus raise money for the temple tax, seemed rather far-fetched. Imagine our excitement, then, when Father Täpper proceeded. "These fish," he said, "have habits like your English magpie. They are attracted by anything sparkling or bright. The natives often find bits of glass, or metal, or stone, or a coin, in their mouths."

What if Jesus, half-joking, said to Peter, "Well, if you want half a shekel, if I were you I would go and catch a fish. You may find the temple tax in its mouth." Possibly the original story ended there, and was a pure piece of fun on the part of Jesus. The rest may have been solemnly written in later. On the other hand, it would not be an impossible happening to find half a shekel in the mouth of a musht.

When you stand on the beach near Father Täpper's lovely hostel, you are standing on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, very near to the place where Jesus called Peter and Andrew. The reader will ask how there can be any certainty about that. Yet the evidence is good.

## BY THE LAKE-SIDE

At this point the warm springs send their waters into the lake, and the fish come and lie in the warm water. This is the only place all round the shores of Galilee where men wade in to fish. They may still be seen with the hand-net like a parachute with tiny weights all round the circumference. As they throw, the net opens out, and then, as it sinks, the weights fall together to the bottom and enclose the fish in the area covered by the net. We watched the fishermen wade in there and fish, using the same kind of net as that mentioned in the Gospels.<sup>1</sup> It may have been here, too, that Jesus, standing a little higher above the water on the lake-side, saw from the shore the shoal of fish and instructed his disciples to throw their net (a different kind from that just mentioned) on the other side of the boat.

Stand with me in the terraced garden of Father Täpper's hostel. To me it will always be one of the most romantic places in the world. It is evening. The evening breezes rustle in the palms and whisper in the tall eucalyptus trees. There are flowers all round you. Purple bougainvillæa on the wall behind you, on the balustrade before you, drooping down nearly to the sea. There are carnations and lilac and hibiscus and orange blossom. You can hear

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iv. 18; Mark i. 16.

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

the plashing of a stream and the gentle lapping of the waves.

The Sea of Galilee stretches south before you. On your left rise up the mountains of Moab and Transjordania, slashed with great riven gorges now filling with purple shadows, as the sun goes down behind the hills on your right. The water of the lake turns to rose and gold, then amethyst, then a smoky blue, then grey. Far down the western coast the lights of Tiberias peep out. A huge tawny moon lifts herself above the eastern mountains. Rising higher through the desert dust she turns a purer gold and sends a golden pathway across the water. A voice, musical and low, breaks into our meditation. "The boat is ready, sir." We walk down the terrace and along a tiny plank pier and into a boat. Two fishermen get in with us and we push off.

With a few strokes we are out on the moonlit waters. We are in a fishing-boat like the one He knew. We are in the company of men like the men He chose. The moonlit water looks to us as it looked to them. The moon rises higher. On one side the Transjordanian mountains look like the terrifying barriers in some story one heard as a child. On the other side the gorge at the entrance to the Way of the Sea stands stern, menacing against the sky. But on

## BY THE LAKE-SIDE

the lake all is peace. Just the ripple of the water at the prow and the rhythmic murmur of the oars, like those which lulled Him to sleep, on the breast of these same waters. No one speaks. One feels so near to Him that if, in the moonlit, misty shadows, a Form separated itself and came towards the boat it would not seem alarming, hardly surprising. . . . "And Jesus came to them, walking upon the waters." How our eyes longed to see Him !

It was time to go back. Soon the bow grates on the shingle. We crunch over the beach, up through the fragrant, shadowed garden, and into the house. I stand at my window awed by the hush, the moonlight, the magic of the night. The ripple of the waves below me gives me the quaint fancy that those waves can know no peace since the only feet that ever walked them know them again no more.

As I stand there, a voice, "Abdul," strangely musical, wonderfully compelling. I hear a full-throated response, though I cannot distinguish the words of the reply.

Was it really Abdul, he said, or Andrew ?

Nineteen hundred years ago a voice at that very place called a name. "Andrew—Come ! Come with Me !" For the first time the voice of Christ gave that invitation just there. Do you realise that, in a sense, the

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

whole of Christianity was in that cry? Since then, men of all nations have heard that cry. It has gone forth from the lake-side at Galilee to the ends of the earth. No day ever passes now but some soul in the world, in north or south or east or west, thrills to the very centre of his being at the sound of it and answers, "I come."

He comes to us, as He came to them. He offers to us the inestimable privilege He offered to them. We may be His men, His women. He will begin with us where we are, as He began with them, not expecting more than we can do or be, but asking for our loyalty, our love, our obedience. Then He can set us to the tasks He has for us. We too shall enter that transforming friendship and do His blessed will, and in that glorious doing find the meaning of life.

**CHAPTER IV**

**AT CANA OF GALILEE**

## CHAPTER IV

### AT CANA OF GALILEE

IT is one of the romances of Christianity that a tiny, tumbledown, poverty-stricken little village at the bottom of a bare, wind-swept hill, surrounded by a few fields from which almost destitute Arabs snatch a meagre harvest, should be mentioned at every Christian wedding in the world. If the Sheikh of Cana or Kenna, as it is now called, could be present in the Abbey or at St. Margaret's, Westminster, at some brilliant society wedding, he would be a little surprised—unless he were a Christian Arab—to hear mention made of his lowly hamlet in which a Westerner would say there is not a habitable abode left. Yet millions of people in the happiest moment of their lives have had their attention drawn to that squalid little village, and when the proudest cities on earth, Athens, Rome, Nineveh, and Babylon, and perhaps Paris, London, and New York, are all forgotten, ministers will join men and women in “holy wedlock,” “which holy estate Christ sanctioned and adorned with His presence and first miracle that He wrought in Cana of Galilee.”

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

What a tribute it is to the Master that His visit, for so short a time, should have made world-famous this little village, set near a wild country where the leopard and wild boar have recently been seen, where snakes lurk in the long grass, and where still the jackal and hyena shatter the silence of the night !

What really happened at Cana ? I want to discuss the so-called miracle, but we should miss the message of Cana of Galilee if we became too obsessed with it. Its message, to which I shall return in this chapter, is that which the marriage service has rightly enshrined, that religion does not exclude our earthly pleasures and happiness. In as far as they are without inherent evil or given a prominence which unduly absorbs our time and energy, they have the Divine approval. Every minister is asked continually whether it is wrong to dance, to smoke, to go to the theatre, to go to the pictures, to do this or to do that. I don't see how he can say that such things are essentially wrong when the Master began His ministry at a wedding feast at which He was the life and soul of the party.

Even a short experience of true religion reveals that we need not be quite so obsessed about the doing of wrong things. The doing of wrong things is a rash. It is not the disease ; it is the symptom of the disease. The disease



## AT CANA OF GALILEE.

General view of Cana of Galilee.

*Photo : American Colony, Jerusalem.*

[See page 43.]

## AT CANA OF GALILEE

is selfishness—setting up a great big *I* in the centre of our world. When we commit ourselves to Christ's way of life, or, in other words, become truly Christian, we set Him in the centre of our world. The rash disappears when the disease is cured. Our doing soon falls into line because it is all controlled from the centre of our being where Christ dwells. No physician of soul or body should merely attack the symptom, but strike at its inner source. St. Augustine put the point in one sentence : “Love God and do what you like.” For what we “*like*” increasingly alters as we grow to love God.

Before we turn to the miracle one or two observations may be made without any intention of discrediting the account of what happened at Cana. The story only occurs in the Fourth Gospel. All scholars are agreed that the Fourth Gospel is the latest of the four and was not written until about A.D. 100. Most scholars agree that it was not written by John the Disciple himself but by an Elder called John, also of Ephesus, to whom Papias refers in a passage quoted by Eusebius. Whoever the author was—and he may remain for ever as anonymous as the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews—he was a Palestinian Jew who had himself been in intimate touch

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

either with Jesus or with John the disciple, or both.<sup>1</sup>

Now the story shows astonishing evidences that its main features were given to the writer by one who was present. The theory that it is all an allegory seems to me far from the truth.<sup>2</sup> But when we are discussing a miracle one important point must not be overlooked.

During the second half of the first century the divinity of Jesus was becoming more and more clearly defined by the early Church. But that divinity was thought to be proved by the marvellous things Jesus did, not by His sublime character, His revelation of God and His teaching. There was thus a tendency—we need not say more than that—to write down His deeds, stressing their miraculous nature. The so-called miraculous draught of fishes and the stilling of the tempest are cases in point.

Remembering this tendency and the long gap between the occurrence of the event and its being recorded ; remembering, also, that the story occurs only in the Fourth Gospel, we should be foolish to expect quite the same historic accuracy of detail as we should find, say, in St. Mark, whose Gospel was dictated by

<sup>1</sup> Professor C. J. Wright, *The Meaning and Message of the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 23 ff. (Hodder & Stoughton).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. G. R. H. Shafto in *Wonders of the Kingdom*, p. 16 (S. C. M.).



## AT CANA OF GALILEE.

The Well of Cana, associated with the story of the  
wedding feast.

*Photo : American Colony, Jerusalem.*



## AT CANA OF GALILEE

St. Peter and written, perhaps, as early as A.D. 56.

But let us not be misunderstood. No wise writer would determine what Christ could or could not do. The universe is not a closed system. If the mind can have effects on the body such as modern psychology reveals—when, for example, under hypnosis, a finger can be made to feel like red-hot iron and a red-hot iron merely like a finger—what may be the results on the body of Nature of a mind like the mind of Christ?

What guides one's thinking in such a story as this is not a presupposition as to what Christ could or could not do, but what was like Him, what was relevant to His plan, what was like the God He constantly revealed. "The Son can do nothing except what He seeth the Father doing." You do not, therefore, ask whether Christ could turn water into wine. You ask whether He who so often refused to use His undoubted powers, except for the highest reasons, is likely to have used them then to cover up a lack of foresight on the part of a host by providing no less than one hundred and twenty gallons of wine (six jars of twenty gallons each),<sup>1</sup> a quantity which would last the family for months.

<sup>1</sup> John ii. 6 (Moffatt).

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

With these thoughts in our minds let us turn to the story. Jesus and His mother, His disciples and His brothers are all guests at the wedding. Jesus's mother is evidently in charge, or it would not be her concern if the wine *did* run out. A Jewish wedding took place after nightfall. It was held usually at the home of the bride's parents, though the bridegroom provided the feast. The part that Mary played suggests to me that she was mothering a motherless bride as women do now, the bride being married, probably according to her own wish, from the house in which she had lived. Cana is hardly five miles north-east of Nazareth. The fact that Jesus's brothers are there suggests that the bridegroom may have been one of them or one of the disciples. We know, for instance, that Peter was married. If the bridegroom—the provider of the feast—were one of Mary's own sons, and if she were responsible, in the rôle of the bride's mother, for everything going well, we can easily understand the urgency one detects in her tones when she takes Jesus on one side and in four words reveals the situation : “They have no wine.”

Jesus's answer *sounds* quite rough. Even the Revised Version gives us, “Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not

## AT CANA OF GALILEE

yet come.”<sup>1</sup> The Greek literally is, “What to Me and thee, woman?” (*Tί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοι, γυναι;*). “What to Me and thee?” you could accurately translate, “Never mind.” And the word “woman” was used very tenderly. Jesus used it on the Cross to Mary. “Woman, behold thy Son.”<sup>2</sup> He used it in the Garden of the Resurrection, “Woman, why wepest thou?”<sup>3</sup> Supposing then at Cana, with a twinkle in His eyes and His hands on her shoulders, He said, in His own way, words which we should want to translate colloquially, “Never mind, dear lady.”

And what of the words “Mine hour is not yet come”? How stern it all sounds! But turn to John vii. 30, where the phrase is also used, “No man laid his hand on Him because His hour was not yet come.” Or John viii. 20, “No man took Him because His hour was not yet come.” These, and other passages in the same gospel,<sup>4</sup> show that the phrase relates to the idea of destiny. We have a similar phrase in English when we colloquially say, “Oh, that is not in the book of words!” Destiny, in the mind of the author of the Fourth Gospel, was far more rigid than in ours. If a thing

<sup>1</sup> John ii. 4.

<sup>2</sup> John xix. 26.

<sup>3</sup> John xx. 15.

<sup>4</sup> xii. 27; xiii. 1; xvii. 1.

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

were destined, it happened. If not, it could not happen.

Removing that bias, I should translate the whole reply of Jesus, "Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come," thus, "Never mind, dear lady, little things like that don't spoil My programme." Colloquial, I grant, but perhaps nearer His meaning than the unreasonable and unmeaning harshness of the usual version.

What happened next? The six stone water-pots are empty. They are used for holding the water in which guests wash their faces, hands, and feet when they arrive at the house. Jesus, we notice, says nothing about wine. He says, "Fill up the jars with water." They filled them to the brim. Then He says, "Now draw some out and take it to the manager of the feast." They did so.

Was it really wine? I can imagine the fun and good fellowship, and One Spirit revelling in it all—not condescendingly as one who graces a feast without really enjoying it and who sits apart, as when a certain type of bishop comes to tea, but one *who really does enjoy joking and laughter*. The wine runs out. Water is served. Why, that's the best joke of all! They lift their wine-cups, as we do in fun when we shout, "Adam's ale is the best of

## AT CANA OF GALILEE

all." The bridegroom is congratulated by the master of ceremonies, who carries the joke farther still "Why, you've kept the best wine until now." It requires only a servant going through the room into the kitchen for a wonderful rumour to start.

When I was in India a young Indian student asked leave from college to take a day's holiday. When asked his reason he said that he had heard that Mr. Gandhi had changed a woman into a man and he wanted to see if it were true. Others openly said that Mr. Gandhi had told women who had no spinning-wheels to bury two strands of their saris in the soil and the next morning they would be able to dig up spinning-wheels.

If such things are said nowadays and during the lifetime of a person believed to have wonderful powers, what rumours are sure to have arisen about Jesus during a time-gap of over seventy years which elapsed between an occurrence and the record in the Fourth Gospel. Moreover, we are not dealing with the twentieth century but with a time nineteen hundred years ago.

Let it be said again that one is not denying possibilities. Some have pointed out that a wine is made from water, the water from the clouds passing through the vine and the grape

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

and by that Divine alchemy becoming wine. Jesus, the Divine Son of God, hastened the process. I do not deny the possibility of this. I have seen God turning water into wine among the vineyards of Italy. But I feel it is not like Him to do it in this way. It is not the Son doing what He saw the Father doing. It is not that one is afraid of the deduction some would make that Jesus encouraged the drinking of wine. In His day drunkenness through drinking the weak wine of the country was almost unknown among Jews, and Jesus never went out of His way to condemn sins which did not exist. But the miracle scarcely seems in harmony with the repudiation of magic during the temptation in the desert.

We must not, however, lose the glory of the message by boggling about miracles. The message is that religion and fun do not exclude one another. Christ would not have sanctified and adorned the marriage feast at Cana if He had come to do so in a professional way. He came because He wanted to. He enjoyed human fun and fellowship. He was that kind of person.

No one who reads the Gospels in a modern translation and without prejudices can think of Christ as hostile to pleasure and fun and laughter. The common people heard Him gladly.

## AT CANA OF GALILEE

True are the sad pages which tell of His sorrows, but do not skip the pages from which you can still hear the laughter of the people as He portrays the fat Pharisee, straining a gnat out of his soup and swallowing a camel, groping for a speck in another's eye when a plank sticks out of his own, refusing an invitation to a free dinner because he has a field to see, or oxen to try, or a wife whose hand he wants to hold. "Don't light a lamp," He says, and "put it under the bed." And what of the friend at midnight who will not rise and give his friend anything at first? But the visitor makes such a fuss and noise that the householder says he'll give him the whole house! The picture of Jesus in the Gospels is of a radiant, laughter-loving Friend whom children adored and everybody loved, save the cynical and hard and hating, who had lost the art of loving anybody.

So when we surrender to Him, we surrender our joys and pleasures too; but, because they are part of God's will for His children, He hands them back to us and asks us to invite Him to share them. When He does so they become richer and purer, for as soon as He is in the midst of our life, controlling it, we find that we don't want to do anything which He could not share, or go anywhere where we could not take

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

Him. Nothing is worth while if it parts us from such a Friend.

Whether Jesus turned water into wine at Cana I would not like to say. One thing I do know: He can take the water of our depression and failure and defeat and turn it into the wine of life.

CHAPTER V  
AT CAPERNAUM

## CHAPTER V

### AT CAPERNAUM

THERE is no place in Palestine more closely associated with Jesus than Capernaum. In a real sense Jesus made it "His own city." Some of His mightiest works were done there. Recall just a few of them :

1. The healing of the Centurion's servant.
2. The healing of the woman with a haemorrhage.
3. The raising of Jairus's daughter.
4. The healing of the blind man on the Sabbath.
5. The healing of a maniac.
6. The healing of the man with the withered hand.
7. The healing of Peter's wife's mother.
8. The healing of the boy who was let down through the roof.

Jesus's walk from Nazareth to Capernaum was only twenty miles. It is not very easy to state with exact precision why He left Nazareth. Probably, as He said, the Prophet had no honour in His own country. The hardest hostility to face

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

is that of the people with whom one has grown up. "Is not this the carpenter's Son, whose father and mother we know?" they said scornfully.

Some think that a branch of the carpenter's business was opened at Capernaum, to which town the brother who may have been married at Cana possibly resorted, though I have never seen the evidence stated. Some think that Jesus wanted to be in a more busy town on the lake-side, which in His day, as we have seen, was a crowded industrial area.

How different it all is to-day! You could take a boat from Father Täpper's hostel at Tabghah, which I have described, and you could be at Capernaum in less than an hour. Or you could walk along the shore past the ruins of Bethsaida, where Father Täpper has discovered a mosaic in the sand, said to be the floor of an ancient church, raised to commemorate the place where the feeding of the five thousand took place.

Capernaum now has vanished, all except the ruins of the synagogue. One stands in the evening on the black boulders which bestrew the shore and listens. The wind murmurs and whispers among the stones on the beach. It is as though ghosts of the long-distant past still wandered there. One cannot help but recall our Lord's words, "And thou, Caper-

## AT CAPERNAUM

naum, shalt thou be exalted to Heaven ? Thou shalt be cast down to Hell."

At one time Capernaum was a busy and thriving town of some fifteen thousand inhabitants. They would be a strange mixture, Jews and Bedouins, Roman soldiers and officers, merchants from Mesopotamia and Egypt. Capernaum must have been on the great main road from Egypt to Damascus. It marked the division between the territory of Herod Antipas and that of Philip. Matthew probably had his office on the quay, or on the side of the high road, or both, for possibly the road ran along the sea-front. His would be a very lucrative position when one thinks of the fish and fruit and oil on which duty would be paid and on which he would get his commission. Tourists, the garrison, the markets, the synagogue, made Capernaum the focus of lake-side life. Here Greek and Roman and Jewish civilisations met as at no other point in the world.<sup>1</sup> We must think of a city, opulent, cosmopolitan, noisy, and gay, with wealth and poverty, asceticism and prostitution, and all the social problems of a city. We get a hint from some words of Jesus : "They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded, they married and were given in marriage."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Booth, *The World of Jesus*, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xvii. 27, 28.

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

Landing at Capernaum, now, means landing on a deserted shore. In Jesus's day it meant landing on a busy quay. There are still some huge stones with marks on them possibly made by the grappling irons and the chains and anchors of ships. Some think they are the quayside stones of Capernaum.<sup>1</sup> Landing then in something approaching a dock, you would have seen rows of sheds, heard the sound of hammers, smelt the dye-works nearby, and the fish being gutted, seen the smoke of pottery kilns and read, possibly, among other advertisements,

### ZEBEDEE AND SONS

#### FISH CONTRACTORS

Nowadays the greatest interest centres in the ruined synagogue. Reverently the Franciscans are recovering the carved stones and setting them up in their places. Four columns stand erect on a broken pavement with grass growing between the stones. There is a flight of stone steps and some fragments of walls: Coping-stones from the ancient building lie about the pavement.

Some experts have no hesitation in telling us that the ruins are those of the actual synagogue in which Jesus taught, in which Jesus healed

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Morton, *In the Steps of the Master*, p. 224.

## AT CAPERNAUM

the man with the withered hand.<sup>1</sup> If so, it is a very exciting discovery, for the monks have found the stones which, because of their shape, they know to have been those which formed the chair from which the preacher sat to preach.<sup>2</sup> Sitting on these, then, one is sitting on the actual stones on which Jesus sat.

There is another most interesting point. In the New Testament<sup>3</sup> we are told that the Caper-naum synagogue was built and presented by the Roman centurion whose servant Jesus healed. We find the sentence, "He loveth our nation and himself built us our synagogue." In amazing support of this one finds, carved on much of the stonework, not only the familiar Jewish emblems of the vine and the six-pointed star of David made of intersecting triangles, and the five-pointed star of Solomon, the olives, seven-branched candlesticks, and trumpets, but also Roman, pagan emblems, a mythical sea-horse, Tritons, even a little heathen temple on wheels, and on one doorway the Roman eagle itself, all suggesting a Roman hand in the building. Further, we find now the steps going *up* to the synagogue. It was the custom of the Jews

<sup>1</sup> Booth, *op. cit.*, p. 112. "There seems little doubt that this was the synagogue which Jesus often visited in Capernaum."

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Luke iv. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Luke vii. 1-5; cf. Matt. viii. 5-13.

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

to make the steps go *down* to a synagogue, so that the head should be bowed on entering.

No Jew was allowed to make any graven image of anything like an animal—a fact which may account for the poverty of the Jewish contribution to art—and the carving at Capernaum does suggest that a Roman built the synagogue, and the Galilean Jews, not so strict as to look such a wonderful gift-horse in the mouth, made no protest at the pagan carving with which it was decorated. Many of the animals carved on the stones have since been defaced. Some think this was done either quite soon, by order of the orthodox in Jerusalem, or else a century or two later, when the temple headquarters had to be moved to Galilee on account of the Roman conquest of Jerusalem.

On the other hand, a very real difficulty presents itself. A centurion is only a non-commissioned officer in charge of a hundred men. There were sixty centurions in a legion which contained six thousand soldiers. He was generally promoted from the ranks. I learn from H. V. Morton<sup>1</sup> that Juvenal in one of his satires tells us that the centurions were laughed at (in the same good-natured way as we laugh at a policeman's feet) “on account of their stocky calves and hobnailed boots.” It is hard to be-

<sup>1</sup> *In the Steps of the Master*, p. 223.

## AT CAPERNAUM

lieve that, even if the centurion in the narrative were the chief centurion of a legion, he could have afforded to present the Jews with a costly and beautiful building the size of the synagogue at Capernaum, capable of seating fifteen hundred people and built of stone brought from the Wadi el Hamam. Perhaps he had married a rich wife or had inherited an unexpected fortune! Some archæologists think that the ruins now being excavated are those of a second synagogue built in the second or third century and destroyed by earthquake in the fourth. It is hard, then, to account for Roman carving. We must await further light. It is just possible, I imagine, that the ruins may be those of the synagogue Jesus used, and that the word "centurion" is a faulty translation. The only other thing they show you in Capernaum is the alleged site of Peter's house, where, Mark tells us, Jesus often stayed. Here Jesus healed Peter's wife's mother. Here the boy was let down through the roof.

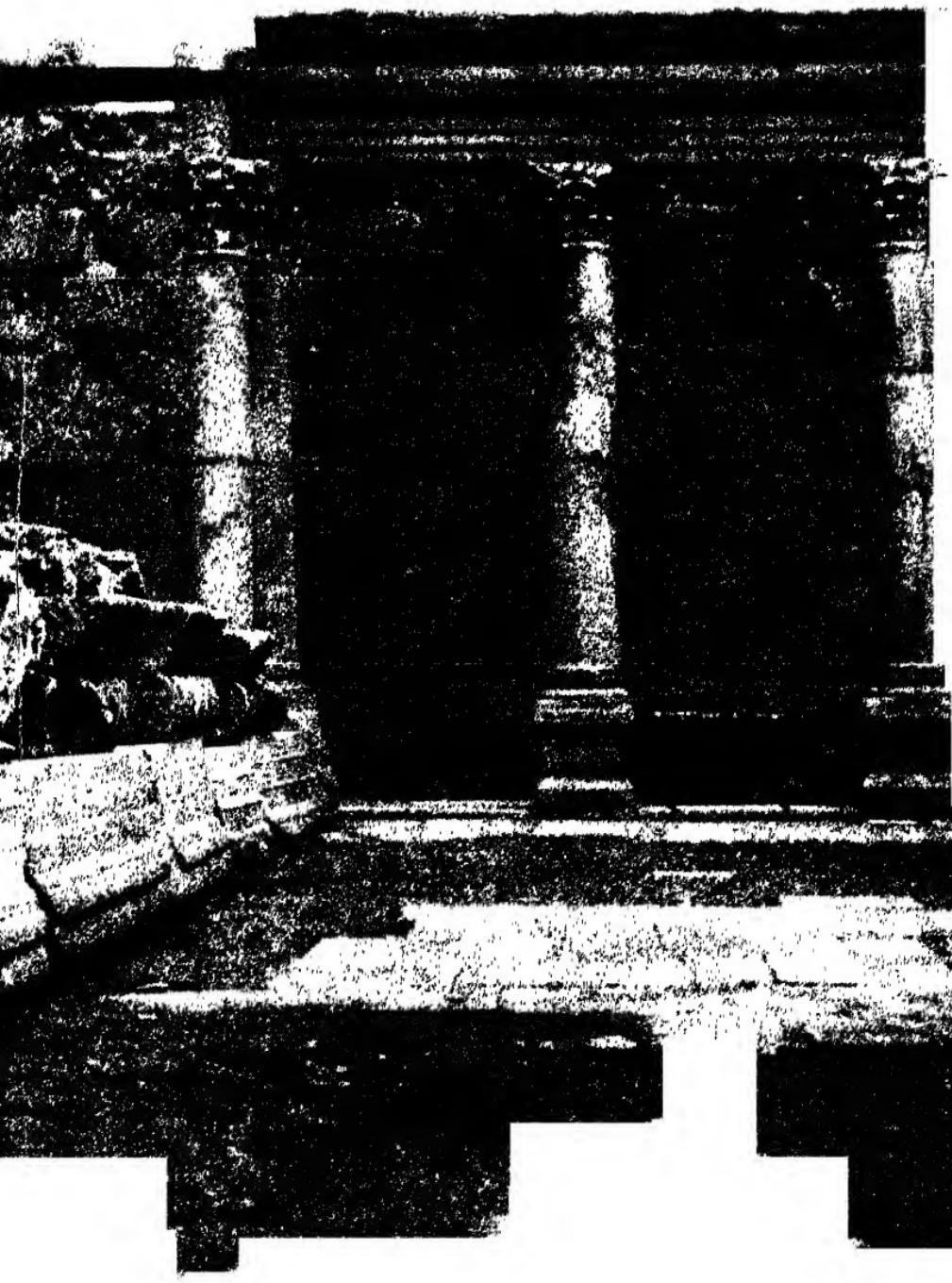
Let us look briefly at this last incident. Jesus is staying in Peter's house. I can only imagine here that it may have been built, as many Eastern houses are, around three or four sides of a tiny courtyard. I have stayed in India, in Mesopotamia, and in Persia in such houses, and seen them in Palestine. The house

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

of a fisherman probably would only be one storey high. Anyone who entertained Jesus would know that he must expect crowds to throng the place. Perhaps Peter did what still is done. Planks and straw-matting or some temporary roofing—now it would be a tarpaulin—are put across from side to side of the flat roof, thus covering the courtyard and making it into an extra room, protected from the blazing sun and—unless it fell in torrents—from the rain.

Four men come carrying the stricken patient. The latter is only a young man, perhaps only a boy in his teens. The Greek word, *τέκνον*, translated “son,” might have been translated “child.” I imagine in Jesus’s intonation it was a term of endearment not far from our “laddie.”<sup>1</sup> The men carrying him are probably relatives, father and brothers and uncles perhaps. They have faith to believe that, if only they can get him to Jesus, he can be healed. They are dismayed to find not only the house full, but the street as well. They cannot get near Jesus. They push their way through until they reach the stairway, which, for every Eastern house, runs from the roadway to the flat roof. Then, in their enthusiasm, they remove the temporary

<sup>1</sup> Matt. ix. 2. The same Greek word was often used by St. Paul as a term of endearment. He used it of Timothy. See 2 Tim. i. 2; cf. also Philem. 10. Note the same word in 3 John iv.



## AT CAPERNAUM.

Part of the Synagogue at Capernaum as it is being reconstructed by the Franciscans from the stones excavated in the neighbourhood.

[See page 60.]



## AT CAPERNAUM

roofing over the courtyard and let the boy down. Obviously, no one could make a hole big enough for a stretcher, in an ordinary roof, without grave risk to those crowded beneath it. Wellhausen has suggested that an Aramaic phrase has been wrongly translated and that the men deposited the boy on the roof, and later Jesus came up and healed him. But in spite of the difficulty of the word suggesting the breaking up of the roof, the suggestion seems unlikely.

Try to imagine this boy being let down with a rope between Jesus and His audience. I have often wondered what were the feelings of the boy as the rope was lowered. For a sick boy to be let down at the end of a rope must have been rather a trying experience, but beyond that, we have to remember the current belief that suffering was always caused by sin. We recall the phrase, "Lord, who sinned? This man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" If the boy looked one way, one imagines he looked into the hard, glittering eyes of scribes and Pharisees, who probably believed that he deserved to suffer, that he was merely facing the due reward of an evil life. What a change when he looked the other way and saw the kind eyes of Jesus looking into his own! Looking up, Jesus caught the expression of tender, wistful, almost passionate, hope on the faces of the

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

four men above, “ and He, seeing *their* faith, said to the boy, ‘ Child, thy sins are forgiven thee.’ ” It is reasonable to suppose that the patient’s paralysis was actually the outcome of what we should call to-day a “ guilt complex ” with much repressed fear locked up in it. The boy was just at the age when youth gets into a panic about sin. When Jesus, with that commanding, penetrating, sympathetic personality, spoke to him in that dramatic atmosphere of expectancy and suggestibility, the complex, as we should say to-day, was resolved, and its physical manifestation, paralysis, would disappear. It is not irrelevant to point out that conditions of paralysis are often symptoms of hysteria, and attacks of hysteria are frequently brought on by patients suffering through worrying about their sins. Fear of the consequences of sin, or, indeed, fear of any kind, is liable to cause functional paralysis. We have all, probably, dreamed at some time or another that we were paralysed and could not move. Probably, at that moment, we actually *were* paralysed. A little girl dreamed that she defended her dog when attacked by a cow, and that at a certain point she could not raise her arm any more to beat off the cow with a stick which she held. Curiously, the paralysis continued several hours after the little girl awakened.

## AT CAPERNAUM

Dr. Paul Dubois, of Berne, quotes an interesting case of a lady who quarrelled with her cook and was seized with paralysis. "I found the patient in bed, very much disturbed by what had happened. Her legs were in tetany when stretched out, and the patient was incapable of making the slightest movement. Sensibility to a prick ceased over the whole cutaneous surface of the lower extremities, and the anaesthesia ceased suddenly at the fold of the groin. While I made the examination the patient asked me : ' Is it serious ? ' . . . ' Serious ! Not in the least ; it is only a nervous weakness brought on by emotion. In three days you will be on your feet ! ' Then, taking her relatives to one side, I took care to say to them : ' You have heard that I have said she will be cured in three days ; I could have said three weeks, three months, or more, for I have seen these paraplegias last for years. It all depends upon the idea that the patient gets into her head. Take care, then, to take it for granted that the patient will be cured within the fixed time. Do not make believe to believe it ; that will not do ; believe it—all of you believe it ! ' Without any further treatment, the patient was cured, and walked on the third day."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I owe this quotation to the Rev. E. R. Micklem, *Miracles and the New Psychology*, p. 91 (Oxford University Press).

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

But my main purpose is not to concentrate attention on the miracle, but on the fact that it was not the patient's faith but the faith of others which made these conditions in which he was healed.

It is well to realise that God's own beneficent desires for the welfare of suffering men and women depend, for their fulfilment, on co-operative human effort. God waits for men to be His instruments or to provide, by prayer and faith, the atmosphere in which alone His healing energies can successfully operate.

I must not stay on the miracle, however attractive. Here, however, is one of the great messages from Capernaum. "Because of *their* faith." What a lot we can do for others by believing *for* them ! Our prayer for another does not tell God something He did not know. It does not persuade an otherwise reluctant God to "intervene." It provides those psychic conditions without which His desires for men are frustrated and His will cannot be done. God is so eager to co-operate with men that He, by a self-denying ordinance, has determined to await that co-operation before His own desire is realised. As the surgeon requires aseptic conditions in which to work and could do no mighty work without those conditions, God can do no mighty work in an atmosphere of unbelief. But our prayers, our love, our sympathy, can produce an

## AT CAPERNAUM

atmosphere of belief, and then the mighty forces of God, not produced, but, as it were, switched on by prayer, can effectively operate ; the conditions are produced in which these forces can do what God wills them to do.

It is not Christian merely to condemn others. We are to condemn sin but not sinners. By condemning others I drive them farther away from healing and I may make them hopeless. "Condemnation," says Jung,<sup>1</sup> "does not liberate, it oppresses. I am the oppressor of the person I condemn, not his friend and fellow-sufferer. We heal others not by condemning but by believing for them and in them."

Have we not proved it in our own lives ? We have been depressed, moody, even rebellious and bitter, and someone has come along who believed in us, needed us indeed. Our mood has gone like a sullen mist before the sun. We have been healed by the faith of others.

If there is one thing more than another that keeps us true to our ideals isn't it the belief others have for us and in us ? If we have been tempted to sin and allow ourselves to think of the faces of our loved ones, especially our little ones, we can imagine their tears, their blushes, their averted glances if they knew. "It was my daddy ". . . . Two of my own strongest

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, p. 271.

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

anchors in life are the love of my loved ones and the affection of my congregation. What does it mean to a man to have the faith of a pure woman who goes on believing in him in an hour when the air is thick with rumour and gossip and scandal ? What does it mean to have real friends, who differ from us no doubt, but who go on believing in us ?

So, from Capernaum, let us receive this message, among all the messages that came to the world in that proud town ; we who have been healed and blessed so often by the prayers and love and belief of others, let us surround other lives with that belief in them which shall call forth their best and enable the Great Healer to do His mighty works in them.

The weary one had rest, the sad had joy that day and wondered how,

A ploughman, whistling at his work, had prayed, "Lord, help them now."

Away in foreign lands they wondered how their feeble words had power.

In England, Christians, two and three, had met to pray an hour.

Yes, we are always wondering, wondering how, because we do not see

Someone, unknown perhaps, and far away, on bended knee.

**CHAPTER VI**

**IN THE COUNTRY OF THE  
GERASENES**

## CHAPTER VI

### IN THE COUNTRY OF THE GERASENES

STAND with me on the roof of the hotel in Tiberias, on the western shores of the lake, and look out over the Sea of Galilee. Behind the eastern shores, across the water, the mountains, at first sight, seem unbroken. A careful scrutiny, however, especially through glasses, reveals that right opposite, due east of Tiberias, there is a break in the hills. A gorge runs down to the sea. On the right of it is a steep bluff, the precipitous sides of which slope down to the water.

One lovely Sunday morning my friends and I took a boat from Tiberias and sailed across the lake and landed at the point where the gorge runs up through the hills. It is a wild, lonely and eerie place. The bluff on the right, reached by walking up the gorge and turning right on to the top, is the place where Jesus talked to a lunatic. The steep slopes are those down which two thousand pigs rushed to destruction.

There has been some interesting discussion as to where this miracle took place. St. Matthew says, "The country of the Gadarenes." But

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

Gadara could only be reached from the lake by a considerable ride on horseback. It is a distance of twenty-five miles. If you have a vivid imagination, you can imagine two thousand pigs doing a distance of twenty-five miles at the double over hill and vale, and incidentally crossing a wide and deep river called the Yarmuk, in order to throw themselves into the sea ! But you need a vivid imagination. It's a case of " See, how they run !" Mark speaks of " the country of the Gerasenes," but Gerasa is farther away still, a well-known town in Perea, now called Jerash, thirty miles from the lake. In either case the piggy part of the story makes the identification impossible.

There is a village called Khersa just behind the bluff to which I have referred. Mr. T. R. Maltby suggests that Peter, speaking Aramaic with a Galilean accent, used to talk about Ger'sa, and that Mark, spelling it out in Greek letters, called the people Gerasenes, and was supposed by critics to have made a mistake, when he was only reporting with his usual accuracy.

On the bluff at the top of the cliff there is a place full of limestone caves and rock-hewn tombs. The area was largely inhabited by Gentiles, a fact which explains the presence of the pigs, which the Jews regarded as unclean.

Now try to see the picture. Jesus is seeking

## COUNTRY OF THE GERASENES

rest and solitude. He is very tired. He leaves the thickly populated western shores of the lake and is sailing east towards the gorge opposite Tiberias which we have described. On the way a storm gets up which alarms the disciples, and Jesus rises from the stern where He had fallen asleep in sheer weariness, and says, "Peace, be still." Both the waters and the disciples' hearts are hushed, though we may believe that the disciples' nerves were still taut after so narrowly escaping death.<sup>1</sup>

When Jesus landed at the foot of the gorge the night was falling. I found it a weird and uncanny place in the blazing sunshine of a May morning. The disciples, nervy and upset, follow Jesus up the gorge, through the darkness. Do you know what even an English wood can be like in the dark when your nerves are upset ? But suppose you believed in evil spirits, suppose you were in a region quite strange to you, suppose you were making for a place of tombs where ghosts were known to dwell ? Suppose every crack of a twig might be a wild beast, every glimmer the gleam of malevolent and baleful eyes ? Then suppose you heard a long-drawn-out sigh and then hideous, mocking laughter that surely could not be human, then a scream and the wild clanking of a chain ! Then, when

<sup>1</sup> Mark iv. 38 : " Master, carest Thou not that we *perish* ? "

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

your hair is standing up on end and your eyeballs are nearly dropping out, when your knees knock together and cold shivers run up and down your spine, suppose a madman came leaping through the darkness and hurled himself at your leader's feet. . . . The disciples never forgot that experience. All three synoptists report it.

Only Jesus was calm. And Jesus "kept saying" (the tense is important), "Come forth, thou unclean spirit, out of the man." But nothing happens. The first attempt at cure is unsuccessful.<sup>1</sup>

"What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? . . . torment me not," the madman cries. He may have known that others thought of him as possessed by devils. He knew the current belief that all devils would one day be cast into Hell. These factors may have made him cry out. "Jesus, Son of God, torment me not." . . .

We do not know how that madman knew Jesus. The whole place may have been so full of the doings of Jesus that even this demented soul had heard of Him through swineherds or others, and recognised Him with His men. We know that Jesus became widely famous as an

<sup>1</sup> Cf. E. R. Micklem, *Miracles and the New Psychology*, p. 55 (Oxford University Press).

## COUNTRY OF THE GERASENES

exorcist. I learn from a scholarly friend that research has brought to light a score of Syriac heathen "spells" as late as the second century, used for the casting out of demons, and each contained the name of Jesus. It may have been that the very condition of the madman's disordered brain gave him access to information not discernible on normal levels of perception. If, as some think, his personality had become dissociated, then it was quite possible that at one moment he spoke as one person and at another, with a completely different voice, as someone else. One has seen such cases.

If so, we cannot be surprised, in a day when everybody believed in evil spirits, if the common diagnosis of many psychoses was that of demon-possession. St. Mark describes the illness in detail, and we see the symptoms of certain forms of insanity which are known to-day—the tearing of the clothes, the passion to be naked, the abnormal strength of the madman. The Jews believed that demon-possession was "a foreign disease," and it may be that for this reason the patient is found in Gentile territory. Or, possibly, he was so tormented and frightened that he fled to this weird place of tombs merely to escape his tormentors. Shafto remarks,<sup>1</sup> "The tendency of sufferers from certain types

<sup>1</sup> *Wonders of the Kingdom*, p. 63 (S.C.M.).

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

of mania to make cemeteries their natural haunt was noted by the medical profession as far back as Galen."

The question of demon-possession is too big for us here. Jesus, in appearing to believe in it, may have been making a concession to the belief of his patient. Everyone who has tried to get alongside those whose mental balance is disturbed knows that failure is certain if one begins by arguing or criticising the patient's ideas, even if they are irrational.

If Jesus had begun the interview by saying, "Now don't talk to me about demons, there are no such things," He would have failed to establish that *rappo*rt which is the first essential of treatment.

We know that Jesus did make concessions to the views of His day even if He Himself did not hold them. He used the current belief that the spittle of a good man had therapeutic value when He healed a blind man.<sup>1</sup> He may have made a concession to the current belief in demons, or He may have been speaking in the Eastern picturesque sense not far removed from some of our own prayers when we ask God to "cast out" our sin or "bring into captivity" our thoughts.

Personally I cannot avoid the conclusion that,

<sup>1</sup> Mark viii. 23.

## COUNTRY OF THE GERASENES

while it is permissible, and in no way destructive of a view of the divinity of Christ, to suppose that in such a thing as medical knowledge He was the child of His age, He may have believed in demon-possession and *have been right in such a belief*. When one has witnessed the baffling symptoms of some forms of psychosis, and seen some of the forms of naked hate and fear incarnate in men in some parts of the earth untouched by Christ's spirit, then the existence of devils, who haunt men and look through their blazing and often terror-stricken eyes, does not seem more difficult than does a belief in angels on a frosty, starlit Christmas Eve in England. What is more important is to watch the method by which Jesus cures this man. His first method of repeating, "Come out of the man," fails. What does He do next?

Before we answer the question let us note what is sometimes done in modern psychotherapy. Suggestion may be tried first. If one interview is all that is possible, it might be that the simple method of suggestion, practised under conditions of close *rappor*t and by a person of strong personality entirely trusted by the patient and able to win his confidence, would suffice to begin a cure. Jesus is repeating again and again, "Come out of the man." The method fails. A modern psychologist would

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

thereupon change his method. He would employ a method calculated to get at the root of the trouble by investigating the way in which it began.

And Jesus asked him, “ What is thy name ? ” Now, to get the significance of the question, we must turn aside for a moment. To know a person’s name, in the East, is supposed to give one power over that person. For that reason in many an Indian wedding the bridegroom does not know his bride’s name until after they are married. He must not have power over her until then. Thousands of Indian soldiers who joined up for the Great War kept their true names a secret. The true name was frequently inscribed on a tiny scroll kept in a metal cylinder and bound to the arm or hung round the neck. We note a similar attitude to a person’s name in the Bible. In Genesis xxxii. the angel asks Jacob his name and Jacob gives it. Jacob says to the angel, “ Tell me thy name,” but no name is given. The angel had power over Jacob ; Jacob had no power over the angel. Savages will rarely give their name. They prefer to be known by nicknames. To give their names away is to give someone power over them. Similarly, the disciples went out “ in the name of Jesus ” is a phrase which we could paraphrase “ in the power of Jesus.”

## COUNTRY OF THE GERASENES

Do we not see, in the light of all this, the significance of Jesus's question to the madman? When Jesus says to the patient, "What is thy name?" the latter knows that Jesus is seeking *power* over him. "Trust Me," Jesus is saying. "Confide in Me. Let Me share your secret. Give yourself away to Me." But there is more in Jesus's question even than that. The question is the equivalent of the very question a modern psychologist would ask, "How did all this begin?" "Through what evil happening did you begin to be like this?" We know now how often such a condition is brought on by what we call a shock or a *blow*.<sup>1</sup> The word "blow" is very intriguing; for a blow is produced by some kind of power. Now, as we have seen, the word "name" is synonymous with "power." The question, "What is thy name?" therefore also means "What was the original blow or shock which led to this condition?" To seek the answer to such a question the highly technical methods of the psychologist are still directed in such a case as the one before us. It is most impressive to find our Lord in the first century using methods which slowly and stumblingly we are just beginning to use to-day!

Jesus's question, therefore, amounts to this,

<sup>1</sup> We still use the word in the sense of shock in the colloquial expression, "What a blow!"

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

“ Can you remember the shock through which all this began ? ”

The man’s answer is most revealing. He doesn’t give his name, as he would have done had the question meant no more than it appears to mean. He says at once, “ Legion.” And Mark, who cannot get the two thousand pigs out of his mind, adds “ for we are many.”

For myself I cannot avoid the conclusion that the man is giving the origin of the shock. Years ago, probably in childhood, the time when those traumas which later cause such devastating havoc in a mind are usually sustained, he had been, I imagine, terrified out of his mind by the deeds of a Roman legion. The New Testament has many a dark hint of the deeds of the legions.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, it is within the bounds of possibility that the man had witnessed as a child the massacre of the innocents. The incident happened in Bethlehem, and probably only about thirty children were killed ; but there is no reason to rule out as impossible the supposition that the madman came from those parts, or, if that be not accepted, that such deeds were not uncommon in those rough days. Imagine a sensitive child who sees Roman soldiers break into homes and put little children to the sword,

<sup>1</sup> Cf. “ The Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices ” (Luke xiii. 1).

## COUNTRY OF THE GERASENES

who sees such soldiers walking through the streets with dripping blades, calling mothers to bring out, under penalty of death, all children of two years and under. Even if he were seven or eight, would not such a child rush into the house shouting, "Mummy, legion, legion." Supposing the mental history of his family were not too good. . . . It takes a far less shock than that to drive such a mind into insanity.

The word "legion" reminds one of many modern occurrences. During the war a man was found wandering about No-Man's Land in France quite mad, driven mad by the fury of German tormentors. He kept repeating the word, "Boche," the slang word we used to indicate the "enemy" of those unhappy days. I have in my files a cutting from the *Yorkshire Post* of November 7th, 1930. It is the report of an inquest on a man at West Hartlepool who could only say one word, the word "Arras," the name of the place where he received a shock during the war.

But the use of the word "legion" I take to have an even deeper significance. All psychologists know that when the original incident which caused the "blow" or shock is recovered to consciousness there is often a powerful abreaction, or display of emotion,

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

and then nine-tenths of the cure has been effected.

The very week in which this chapter was being first written I had to deal in my psychological work with the case of a woman who was nightly unable to sleep until three or four in the morning, and then, within an hour of falling asleep, she walked, or rather ran, in her sleep, during a terrifying nightmare. In this nightmare she thought a man was coming through her bedroom window and attacking her by grasping her throat and strangling her. In the course of the nightmare she fought her assailant. The battle was desperate. She wakened the whole house, night after night, with piercing screams, rushed along the bedroom corridor, and then wakened at the far end of the landing in pitiable distress amounting to collapse. Her doctor, who had had, like most, no psychological training, told her her troubles were due to the shock of her mother's death, and he prescribed the usual bromide. Why the shock of a mother's death should send her daughter screaming down the bedroom corridor in the middle of the night he did not attempt to explain.

In my room, under a certain condition of mind in which induced suggestion brought dissociation and the ability to recover memories

## COUNTRY OF THE GERASENES

buried in the unconscious mind, she recovered the repressed and forgotten memory of a man coming into her bedroom and approaching her from between the window curtains with gleaming eyes and outstretched hands directed towards her throat. As she recovered the memory she let out scream after scream of terrifying intensity and attempted violently to rise from the couch in my room on which she was lying. Before I could force her down again she had all but knocked me over and sent some of the furniture flying. Anybody passing my rooms must have thought someone was being murdered, and some other patients in the waiting-room were not a little alarmed. She has completely recovered. I suppose in olden days they would have said that the devil had been cast out. They certainly knew nothing of analysis under hypnosis. She did not use the word "legion." Had she used the word "sex" the parallel would have been almost complete, except that she is in no sense insane. The trouble was a neurosis, a faulty adjustment to life—not a psychosis, a true insanity.

The patient thought her nightmare was due to the shock of her mother's death, and all her friends believed so too. What had really happened was this: sixteen years previously, when a girl of twenty, she had been a visitor

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

to the home of Mr. and Mrs. A. Mr. A. was on night-duty at the post office. It was his custom to return about six in the morning. Mrs. A., therefore, got up soon after five in order to prepare a meal ready for her husband when he came in. Mr. A. came in early one morning and entered the bedroom of my patient, whom we will call Miss X. He apparently walked over to the bay-window of her room, because from the window he could make sure that his wife was busily engaged in preparing his breakfast. The inside of the kitchen was visible from Miss X's window. Until this fact emerged I could not understand why, in the nightmare, the man was entering her room *through the window*, since most English bedroom windows are not on the ground floor.

Apparently Miss X awakened to see him emerging through the window curtains after his scrutiny of the kitchen. He advanced towards the bed, saying in an intense voice, "If you move or make a sound I'll throttle you." She lay still, petrified with fright, and neither screamed nor ran, though she longed to do both. The tendency to do both was repressed, together with an admitted desire for sex experience, a desire which she had had since puberty. Thus, in the dream or nightmare, she both screamed and ran. Again and again in dreams

## COUNTRY OF THE GERASENES

repressed and desired action is carried out. It is astonishing that such an incident could have been "forgotten," but it was repressed with the other sex material. The patient had always been taught that sex was evil. She had been brought up in entire ignorance of sex facts. This made the repression and an amnesia regarding this incident easier for the unconscious mind to maintain.

I was glad to note the violent abreaction, or release of repressed emotion, when the incident was recovered fully to conscious memory and the significance of the nightmare and its characteristics fully understood. When such an abreaction does take place at the recovery of a buried memory I have found that the cure is generally complete and permanent. She sobbed for some time on returning to consciousness after the hypnosis, and then sat up, "clothed and in her right mind." Now, as I pass these pages for the press, I find that it is eighteen months since this patient was treated. Since then she has not had a single recurrence of this nightmare, a fact which I have recently confirmed. I think, then, that we may use the word "cure" in her case. Indeed, in my view, there is now no condition in the mind capable of setting up the distress which she suffered before she came to me.

## COUNTRY OF THE GERASENES

abreaction occurred.<sup>1</sup> Is it any wonder that the pigs, grazing quietly near, got into a panic and rushed into the sea? I always imagine that the swineherds had got so interested in what was happening that they had forgotten the pigs and were very interested spectators. After all, it was a lonely job minding pigs all night in the desolate hills. Here was something happening that kept them awake. When the man screamed "Legion" did they first run in terror towards their neglected herds and did they cause them to panic, communicating their fear to the pigs as human beings so often do to animals? The herdsmen ought never to have allowed the animals to get into such a dangerous position. Pigs frequently stampede if frightened.<sup>2</sup> The accident should never have happened. At any rate it was a useful excuse which the swineherds could make to the owners of the swine. The pig was supposed to be the home of the unclean demon. But what more simple for the swineherds to say that Jesus cast devils out of the man into the pigs and they couldn't be expected to guard the pigs from

<sup>1</sup> An abreaction is the release of emotion which has been locked up in the psychological condition under treatment.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. press cutting from the *News Chronicle*, September 6th, 1933: "At Ely Inn, the residence of Mr. F. W. L——, fifty-six prize pigs stampeded when the smoke [of a fire] enveloped the piggery."

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

*devils* ! Indeed, I wonder if the swineherds came to Jesus and complained of their loss. I wonder if He expressed sympathy. I wonder if He said, " Poor creatures, it was fear that destroyed them, the same evil thing that was spoiling this poor madman's life." If he did, it is easy to see how the belief grew that the devils had been driven from the man into the swine.<sup>1</sup>

And what could be more satisfying for the patient than to accept that view. We see that, before the stampede, he beseeches Jesus not to send him out of the country, that is back home again.<sup>2</sup> He has the psychotic's fear of the trouble coming back. Supposing he goes home and it breaks out there again and possesses his dear ones, too ! When the stampede occurs, he accepts the view that the devils have gone from him into the swine, and how overjoyed beyond all belief must he have felt to realise that the pigs had gone over the cliff at the one place in the whole circle of the lake where deep water comes up to steep land.

Don't miss the significance of this ! Deep water was one of the few ways of *finally* disposing of an evil spirit. If it could be drowned in deep water, it would trouble the world no longer.

<sup>1</sup> I owe a suggestion here to a beautiful book, *By an Unknown Disciple*. (Hodder & Stoughton.)

<sup>2</sup> Dr. J. A. Findlay, *Daily Readings in St. Mark's Gospel*, p. 6.

## COUNTRY OF THE GERASENES

This underlies other passages in the Bible. If you make a child stumble you have “a devil.” Better for you, says Jesus, if you had a millstone round your neck and that you were drowned in the *depths* of the sea. Micah the prophet says that God will cast men’s sins into the *depth* of the sea.<sup>1</sup> The idea has lingered on. Some say that Mount Pilatus (seven thousand feet) is so called because of a strange story. Pilate, it is said, some few years after the Crucifixion, was dismissed from Jerusalem, and wandered all over the Roman world, devil-ridden and insane. Finally, he committed suicide by drowning himself in a *deep* lake high up in the hollows of Mount Pilatus.

The end of the story is full of the peace of the dawn breaking now over the lake and turning its steel to amber. “They behold him that was possessed with devils, sitting, clothed and in his right mind. . . . And they began to beseech Him to depart from their borders.” No wonder. Two thousand pigs cost a lot of money and they valued pigs far more than the sanity of one poor, broken soul. Jesus did not, even though He had no intention that the pigs should be destroyed.

The work is done. Jesus, who had crossed the lake to spend a night in quiet peace, spent it

<sup>1</sup> vii. 19.

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

Thus a distressing trouble which had cursed the patient for no less than sixteen years cleared up in less than an hour. Unable at that time to stay in rooms on holiday, much less in hotel or boarding-house, she can do so now with impunity. Unable to contemplate marriage, which was postponed year after year, I have had the privilege of marrying her to her overjoyed and grateful lover. He had waited eight years for her.

Our conversation did not, of course, merely deal with the psychological disability but with her whole attitude to life. Humpty Dumpty had to be put together again. We talked simply about religion and God, without whom no adjustment, no synthesis can be made. At a subsequent service in my church she "found God," and wrote me a letter full of happiness, gratitude, and peace.

The case bears a striking similarity to the case at Kheresa, except that it was easier to deal with and did not require any courage on my part. Yet it helps us to understand a little, perhaps, the condition of mind of the wild man of the tombs and the words of astonishing psychological insight which Jesus used concerning him.

Now imagine the man who said, "Legion," screaming and running about, or jumping in the air, as he is sure to have done if a psychological

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

with a dangerous lunatic. Now he is making His way down the *wadi* to the beach. The patient does not want to leave Him. What could be more natural? But it would not do. He would be an exhibit, a trophy, a specimen. People would point the finger. "That's the man!" It would be bad for the patient. It would draw attention to that part of Jesus's work which, however important, was not of the first importance. "No," says Jesus gently, "go to your own friends at home and tell them what great things a merciful God has done for you." The man went his way, says Mark, and went to ten cities, telling the marvellous news.

## CHAPTER VII

### AGAIN AT CAPERNAUM

## CHAPTER VII

### AGAIN AT CAPERNAUM

IN this chapter I want us to see Jesus with the woman who touched the hem of His garment. To watch Jesus at work through the windows which the Gospel stories open for us, using all the aids which scholarship, interpretation, and imagination offer, is to understand a little better the way in which He works to-day. To see Him deal, in an interview, with a soul in Capernaum, long ago, is to glimpse how He deals with a soul now, in the land we love. And since Jesus revealed God, since the words are everlastingly true, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father," to watch Jesus is to watch God at work on human lives, to understand how He cares for us and how He would deal with us.

First we must try to imagine what happened. Jesus had gone across the lake to its eastern shores in search of rest and quiet and peace. Instead of a quiet period of recreation—in the true sense of that word—He had spent the whole night in dealing with one whom we should regard as a dangerous lunatic.

After the night had passed we can imagine a

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

glorious sunrise, and Jesus getting into a fisherman's boat below Gadara, half-way down the eastern shore, and sailing across the lake towards Capernaum on the north-west coast. As the sun gets above the wild Transjordania mountains and turns the water from grey to amber and amber to rose and rose to blue, the nose of Jesus's boat touches the quayside at Capernaum. We must picture, as we noted in the chapter on Capernaum, a busy, industrial scene with many boats and much bustle and business going on, not the lonely deserted place which is the modern Capernaum.

A great multitude is on the quayside to welcome Jesus, hoping to see miracles and to hear His words. One of the rulers of the synagogue falls at Jesus's feet and asks Him to cure his little daughter who is at the point of death. "I pray Thee that Thou come and lay Thy hands on her that she may be made whole and live."

Can you see the scene, the quayside, the multitude, Jairus at Jesus's feet, Jesus lifting him up, going with him up the hill towards his house? Try to see into Jairus's mind. His joy. His dear little maid will be given back to him. His impatience to proceed. How can he ever get Jesus through that crowd when his little maid is dying?

## AGAIN AT CAPERNAUM

Then an interruption ! We must give thought to Jairus later. We can sympathise with his feelings. I think they would amount to this : “ Why can’t Jesus deal with this woman another time. She’s been ill for years ; her case isn’t urgent, and she can wait. My lassie, only twelve years old, is dying.<sup>1</sup> It will soon be too late.” We can be sure that Jesus’s hand was on Jairus’s shoulder, that Jesus was “brothering his mind” in its time of anxiety ; and we know that Jesus did all that Jairus needed later.

I want us to turn aside and watch Jesus deal with this woman. Tradition calls her Veronica, and Eusebius (A.D. 260–340) says she belonged to Cæsarea Philippi and that in his day (fourth century) there was a statue of her outside a house said to have been hers, a statue of a woman kneeling with hands outstretched toward Jesus, whose hand is stretched out to her. Jesus, it seems to me, always lived so close to God that He knew what God wanted Him to do next. He knew—and here is one of the marks of one who has mastered the art of living—what to leave out and what to do next. God wanted Him at that moment to keep Jairus waiting.

So here is this poor woman. We need not spend time on her illness. It seems to have

<sup>1</sup> All three Evangelists comment on the length of the woman’s illness and the tender age of the child.

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

been a functional haemorrhage now called menorrhagia, an abnormally profuse discharge of the menstrual flow, called in the Gospels an issue of blood.

St. Mark says, "She had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered but rather grew worse." It sounds a severe criticism of doctors, but we feel sympathetic with the woman when Pliny tells us in his *Natural History* that the popular remedies for the illness in question were poulticing with fresh ass's dung and drinking the urine of a goat. Doctors were not popular in Jesus's day. Listen to the current proverbs about them : "To live under doctor's orders is sorry living." Here is another : "A doctor is worse than a robber. The robber takes your money or your life. A doctor takes both." Even the Talmud says, "The best of doctors is ripe for Hell." St. Luke was a doctor. We can hardly expect that he would say such a rude thing about the medical profession. He says, "She had spent all her living upon physicians," and *could* not, literally was "unable" to, be healed by any. The phrase used hints that she was too weak to benefit. The treatment was correct, but the patient was not strong enough to benefit by it. One seems to have heard similar things since. The operation was

## AGAIN AT CAPERNAUM

successful, but the patient died—from exhaustion or heart-failure or something else !

The important point about this illness was that it made the patient ceremonially unclean. Some think she was a Gentile, because they argue that a Jewess would never have dared to be abroad with such a malady. She was not allowed to attend any religious services. What is more, she was not allowed to come into contact with any other person, man or woman.<sup>1</sup> How unhappy and lonely she must have been ! How hard the world was ! She was even denied “the consolation of religion.” But she had heard much of Jesus. We are told that specifically.<sup>2</sup> He was different somehow from the other Rabbis. He did not care about the laws concerning ceremonial uncleanness. He talked with lepers and feasted with sinners. She would dare all. If she could just *touch* Him. . . .

It must be done surreptitiously. All the Evangelists note that. She “came behind Him in the crowd.” She stooped nearly to the ground, for the part of His raiment that she touched was the “zizith”—at least so Matthew and Luke tell us.<sup>3</sup> It was the sacred blue cord or perhaps the tassel sewn on to the corner of

<sup>1</sup> Lev. xv. 19-33.

<sup>2</sup> Mark v. 27.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. ix. 20; Luke viii. 44.

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

the robe by the express orders of Moses.<sup>1</sup> Instantly something happened. "Straightway," says Mark. "Immediately," says Luke. She herself "felt in her body that she was healed of her plague."

We are faced here with a difficult question. If we accept Matthew's account, Jesus turned and saw the woman and said, "Daughter, be of good cheer, thy faith hath made thee whole, and the woman was healed from that hour."<sup>2</sup> But I think Mark and Luke are nearer and are in agreement. In their versions Jesus did not cure the patient. He was unconscious of her presence until she was cured. As Shafto says,<sup>3</sup> "She touched and was healed without the conscious co-operation of Jesus." And Jesus said to her, "Daughter, *thy faith* hath made thee whole"; not My power or God's power.

Jesus enunciates a law. He does not want people to think that if they are lucky enough to get near Him and touch His clothes, miracles happen. It was not her touch but her faith. And the lesson we are to learn is that faith will be rewarded. Not once, in this picturesque setting, but always and anywhere. We must learn to develop faith; and if Science has

<sup>1</sup> Numbers xv. 38.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. ix. 22.

<sup>3</sup> *Wonders of the Kingdom*, p. 118.

## AGAIN AT CAPERNAUM

made ridiculous a faith which has so large an element of superstition in it as had this woman's, well, Science in its various branches must show us the way to tap the same resources by a faith built on knowledge and understanding instead of on the credulity which Science has undermined.

I think we must not take too literally the thought that Jesus's own vitality was lowered when the woman was healed. If He consciously dealt with her, He would tire in the process; but if she were healed through her own faith and He was unconscious of it, we are presented, by the record of His depleted vitality, with a view of power which is hard to accept in modern times. It sounds as though He lost something which she gained, as though "power" passed from Him through His clothes into the woman. This is materialism or very near it. Healers have told me that healing is tiring work, but not that energy is flowing from them into their patients.<sup>1</sup>

Probably such a view of healing power pertained in Jesus's day. We remember that soon after Jesus passed from human sight the folk

<sup>1</sup> Some of my Spiritualist friends tell me that they believe that Christ lost what they call ectoplasm, when the woman touched His clothes. I have considered the point with sympathy, but I do not feel convinced by those who argue for this view, nor that we are much farther on if it be accepted.

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

of Ephesus carried home to their sick friends handkerchiefs and aprons which had been in contact with St. Paul's body. But this view of healing as flowing from people into things makes a magical story and confronts us with unnecessary difficulties. The woman's faith healed her, and her faith was called forth by what she had heard of Christ. What He intended to convey by His words about power going forth from Him was simply, I think, that He knew that someone needed Him.

He turned and said, "Who touched My clothes?" They must have laughed. A multitude was thronging Him. But Jesus, who was never content with mere healing but always wanted to bring people into the vital grips of personal relationships, knew that He must say a word to some troubled soul. If you ask me how He knew, I cannot tell you. How did He know that another woman had five husbands? Is there not an avenue of knowledge as yet unexplored and undeveloped through which necessary knowledge can come to the spiritually sensitive? Is there, behind our words, "second sight," or "telepathy," a way to knowledge of which one day we may know more, and on the benefit of which Jesus could always rely?

For myself, however, I wonder if Jesus's

## AGAIN AT CAPERNAUM

knowledge that someone had touched Him is not very easily explained. The woman was stooping. She was terribly nervous. The crowd was pressing her. What more likely than that, in a stooping position, she clutched at the tassel of His robe and stumbled or was pushed by the crowd and so tugged at it. Such a tug is easily distinguishable from the ordinary pressure of a crowd.

The woman understood. "Trembling" and "falling down," say both Mark and Luke, she came. We do not wonder that she trembled. The nature of the illness, her breaking of the ceremonial laws, the emotional, almost incredible joy in health received after twelve long years, would make anyone tremble, and now the publicity, the fear of condemnation from someone or other in the crowd, the august presence of Jesus. She fell at His feet "in the presence of all the people," says Luke, impressed by her courage, and she told Him her story.

Note the last touch of tenderness. He asks no questions. He keeps her not a moment. He knows that she wants nothing now so much as to lose herself in the crowd and then get back to her loved ones and tell them the news. So He dismisses her in a sentence. "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague."

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

I think we should not use the story most helpfully if we stayed now to discuss cures by suggestion, for the woman's "faith" was of little higher order than that. It was not faith in Christ in the sense in which we generally use that term. The evidence is overwhelming that, in the case more particularly of a certain type of illness loosely called functional, the sheer belief in cure will often bring about cure, even without a unique personality like Christ's operating. That, to me, is not the most important feature of the story. Even in my own records I have more than one case of similar feminine functional disorders, in the same group of illnesses, entirely and permanently cured in one treatment by suggestion, given that the patients are sufficiently suggestible.

The glorious truth here, I think, is His desire, even in this busy, crowded day, to come into personal relationships. "Daughter," He said. It is a tender word. A word, remember, from a Jewish rabbi to an "unclean" woman who, in touching Him, had, in the eyes of strict Jews, made Him unclean too.

And in Jesus we are watching God at work in human lives.

If these words reach the eyes of one who feels lonely and uncared for, one who feels a nobody, a nonentity, in the vast crowds of

## AGAIN AT CAPERNAUM

OCTOBER 1914

great cities or the millions alive upon this earth ; if these words reach one who has contemplated the universe through the eyes of modern science until the relation of God to the *world*, let alone one human life upon it, seems a farce without meaning ; if these words reach the eye of one who, in a time of unemployment or loneliness or weakness or depression, feels unwanted and uncared for and unloved, one who has been moved to draw near to Him and touch the hem of His raiment in Nature or Music or Poetry or Art or Worship, let such stay and contemplate God, amid all His flaming worlds, turning, as it were, His eyes searching, and then His voice saying, “Who wanted Me ?”

The suggestion is absurd. But it is only absurd to think that His eyes *search* for you, for they are on you now. Only absurd to think a voice asks, “Who wanted Me ?” for He knows you want Him. And He wants you with a constancy that puts your wanting Him to shame. Let Him draw you to Himself. Kneel down for a moment before Him and whisper to yourself these precious words of truth, “He loved *me*. He gave Himself up for *me*.” You will find something greater even than health of body. Jesus Christ will “come alive” for you. He will step out of

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

the Gospel story. He will come down the arches of the years. He is not too busy to let you come near Him. Your life can touch His if you are willing to seek and to stoop. And if you really do touch Him life will never be the same again. Where He touches there is healing. Where He beckons, there the light shines. And where He dwells there is peace.

**CHAPTER VIII**

**AT MAGDALA**

## CHAPTER VIII

### AT MAGDALA

MAGDALA, now called Mejdel, is a wretched and squalid little village of mud huts and Bedouin tents on the north-west shores of the Sea of Galilee, three miles north of Tiberias.

It is a depressing little place, and if you motor along the coast road which skirts the lake, it is hardly worth stopping the car to look at it. In the days of Jesus it was a busy town with two industries, dyeing, and a unique industry, the sale of doves for temple sacrifices. To the west of Magdala there opens the huge gorge, called the Way of the Sea, running east and west, and described in an earlier chapter.<sup>1</sup> This gorge is also called the Valley of Doves, and I suppose from time immemorial it has been the home of millions of them. The people of Magdala scaled these cliffs and snared the birds and took the young. It is said that in Magdala alone there were three hundred shops, where those who could not afford to offer a lamb in the temple could purchase doves or pigeons. We remember that Jesus's mother made an offering

<sup>1</sup> See p. 29.

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

of “two young pigeons.” Doves still fly in hundreds round the site of Magdala, but the town has all but disappeared.

The factors which make a name live on through history are indeed strange. We saw how Cana, an obscure little village, which would never have become known to history, became famous because of a wedding which Jesus attended. Magdala will be always famous for a stranger reason still. It was the home of a prostitute whom Jesus saved from sin. How strange it is ! Imagine the great men of a city setting down those things which might possibly make their city world-famous. It might be the temple, the theatre, the beautiful streets, or some wonderful park or sea-front. It might be the name of some great poet, or philosopher, or statesman. The very last thing that anyone would imagine could make a city famous must surely be the existence in it of one of its shameful women who began a new way of life. Here at Magdala began one of the most wonderful romances which the New Testament contains. I want the reader, if he can, to see just how beautiful it is.

There are two stories about Mary of Magdala in the New Testament. The first St. Luke alone preserves.<sup>1</sup> Probably he received it from

<sup>1</sup> vii. 36-50.

## A T M A G D A L A

some of his women friends—who greatly helped him to compile his narratives—while the twelve were away on tour. This may explain the silence of the other three evangelists, for the story they tell is a different story, though both have certain points in common.

The scene of both is a feast. In each the woman anoints Jesus with ointment, but it is most important to realise that there are two separate incidents, and it is difficult to understand how some writers have carelessly supposed that we have differing accounts of the same incident. They cannot be the same, for the first, the one written by St. Luke, happened at Magdala comparatively early in the ministry of Jesus, and the second, recorded in Matthew,<sup>1</sup> Mark,<sup>2</sup> and John,<sup>3</sup> happened at Bethany, just before His death.

The host in each case is called Simon, but the two Simons were quite different. The name is as common as John with us. The host at Magdala was Simon the Pharisee. The host at Bethany was Simon a leper, who had probably been cured by Jesus, and who was the father of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. In both cases the woman brought an alabaster cruse of ointment—in the first case ordinary ointment, in the second case spikenard, “very costly.”

<sup>1</sup> xxvi. 6.

<sup>2</sup> xiv. 3.

<sup>3</sup> xii. 2.

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

I feel quite certain that the woman in both cases was the same, and I think there is no doubt that she was Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha. Only the Fourth Gospel gives the name of the woman, probably because, as St. John's Gospel was written so late and the woman was dead, there was not the same point in keeping her name a secret. St. John definitely says that the woman in the second story was Mary, the sister of Lazarus.<sup>1</sup> Some scholars, including no less an authority than Lightfoot, agree that the woman in both stories was the same. Writers like Dr. David Smith and Mr. Basil Mathews concur. The former sets out the evidence very attractively in his book *The Days of His Flesh*.<sup>2</sup>

With these preliminaries let us look at the first story. Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, has somehow fallen away from the paths of virtue and is living a dissolute life, the life of a prostitute in Magdala. Magdala was a city notorious for its harlots.

Now a certain Pharisee of Magdala called Simon, no relative of Mary, a very important person, had invited Jesus to dinner, not because he was particularly friendly with Jesus, rather the reverse, but because, being the head of the Jewish community in the place, he was

<sup>1</sup> xi. 2.

<sup>2</sup> p. 208.

## AT MAGDALA.

View of Magdala on the shores of the Lake, showing the motor road running past it and the high cliffs at the entrance to the Valley of Doves, or Way of the Sea.

*Photo : American Colony, Jerusalem.*

[See page 109.]





## AT MAGDALA

expected to invite any visiting Rabbi to his house.

It is easy to understand why such studied courtesy should have been offered to Jesus. Possibly Simon had heard that Jesus was openly breaking the Sabbath, criticising the Pharisees, to which sect he belonged, flouting the law, and being friendly with suspicious characters. Moreover, Simon knew that He was of peasant or humble birth. Such facts would be enough to make a Pharisee treat Him rudely.

At any rate, Simon has given his servants definite orders that Jesus is to be snubbed. For, in the ordinary way when a guest arrived on the veranda, the low, flat, stone platform, three steps from the garden, a slave would at once approach, remove his sandals, bathe his feet,<sup>1</sup> and show him into the first room, approached between pillars, in which his host would greet him with the kiss of hospitality.

In the case of Jesus this was not done. Without these courtesies Jesus passed through the ante-room into the dining-room, which is generally open to the courtyard in the centre of the house, the courtyard to which people could gain access from outside.

We may watch Jesus reclining on one of the

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes the actual bathing of the feet was done as the guest reclined at the commencement of the meal.

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

couches, at an angle with the table, expecting the further courtesy of scented oil poured on His head. He made no comment about this pointed omission, though He could not possibly have failed to notice it.

Evidently He has been followed in the street by a woman. Mary watched Him step on to the veranda and enter between the pillars, and she noticed that He had not been treated courteously. In the shadows of Simon's garden she stole round to the back of the house, from which it is quite easy to enter the courtyard, and from the courtyard quite easy to enter the dining-room. We may imagine her, like a moonbeam, gliding from pillar to pillar so that the servants, who are setting the table and completing the preparations for the meal, do not see her and order her out. I imagine the dining-room partly curtained, with curtains between the pillars that do not reach to the ground, and which provide a maximum of privacy and a maximum of ventilation. I imagine lamps either hanging from the ceiling or standing in lamp-stands, lamps generally with a naked flame. The evening breeze makes them flicker. There are moving shadows continually in the room, which help the woman to draw near unseen.

Just as the meal is about to commence, before anybody realises what is happening, she darts

## AT MAGDALA

in and makes for the couch, or mattress as we should call it, on which Jesus is reclining. Her unbound hair is falling about her shoulders. In a moment she is recognised as one of the harlots of Magdala. Her unbound hair, apart from everything else, marked out the harlot. She has heard Jesus preach in the open air. Her whole soul has been thrilled by the wonderful news that forgiving love can restore even her ; that there is hope even for her ; and so she would fain show Jesus how much she loves Him for His message, how penitent she is for the past, and how she longs for a new life.

Standing at His feet her tears fall upon them. She wipes them away with her flowing hair, kisses His feet repeatedly, and then anoints them with ointment. It was usual to anoint the head. She dared not approach His head. In deep humility she anoints His feet.

Simon is horrified. Had she approached him he would have spurned her away. "Touch me not for thou art unclean," was the saying a Rabbi would have used to a harlot, and the servants would have driven her out. Probably, as it was, they would have driven her out had it not been clear that *Jesus* was not in the slightest bit embarrassed, and, after all, He was the guest. Indeed, He was the only person around that table who was not embarrassed.

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

After a terrible silence Simon says to his nearest guest, "This man, if He were a prophet, would have perceived who and what manner of woman this is which toucheth Him, that she is a sinner." There is terrible sarcasm in Simon's sentence. It looks as though he had been inveigled into inviting Jesus because He was supposed to be a prophet. We notice the sarcasm. "It does not require much of a prophet to see what she is." At the same time what Simon does not say is a tremendous tribute to the character of Jesus. I am quite sure that a far worse interpretation would have been put on the presence of the woman had it not been that His character was entirely above suspicion, even to His enemies. "Who is this who is followed about by a prostitute?" It is notable that, though they called Him the *Friend* of sinners, no one, throughout the whole Gospel narrative, called Him a sinner or hinted at such a thing.

Jesus perceives the embarrassment and, turning to Simon, He says, "I have something to say to thee." Very curtly, Simon says, "Say on, Teacher." And Jesus then asks His host a question. "Two men are in debt to a money lender. One owes him twenty-five pounds, the other two pounds ten shillings. Neither of them could pay a penny, so he freely forgave

## AT MAGDALA

them. Which would love him most?" I think there is evidence that Simon never saw the meaning of the parable at that point. Rather loftily, as if the matter were irrelevant, he said, "The man to whom he forgave most." One can almost see and hear Simon's yawn. And Jesus brings home His message.

We must be careful here. The argument is not, "Let us sin a great deal that we may be forgiven much and taught to love much" The argument is the same argument that lay behind Jesus's sentence on another occasion, "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." That sentence was one of the most ironical things Jesus ever said. Here is Simon sinning against God by his pride and narrow intolerance, but with no sense of sin and therefore no sense of the need of forgiveness, and therefore no answering love. Here is a woman who is a sinner, but who is overwhelmed with a sense of her sin and, being greatly forgiven, greatly loved.

It is not easy to produce in English the gentle sarcasm and the beautiful rhythm of the reply of Jesus. The reply swings round three points —Me, Thou, and She. "Water to *Me* upon My feet *thou* gavest not, but *she* rained her tears upon My feet and wiped them away with her hair. A kiss to *Me* *thou* gavest not, but *she*, since

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

I entered, did not cease kissing My feet. With oil *My* head *thou* didst not anoint, but *she* with perfume anointed My feet. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven." You can hear them gasp. "Who is this that forgives sin? And He said unto her, "Thy sins are forgiven. Thy faith hath saved thee. Go in peace."

I believe that that is the story of how, in northern Magdala, Jesus found Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, far from her home, living a dissolute life, and restored her to better things.

Now turn to the second story. It is the end of the last sabbath which Jesus ever spent on earth. Jesus begins His journey from Jericho to Jerusalem, where He has decided to eat the Passover. On reaching Bethany He halts with the twelve. This time he receives a great welcome. The atmosphere is different. The principal man of the village, Simon, the father of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary, makes a great banquet and invites a large company. Lazarus, as son of the host, would sit at the table. The women, Mary and Martha, would help to serve and entertain the guests. Though we call it a banquet the happiness was probably spoilt for the discerning by the thought of impending tragedy.

## AT MAGDALA

Then happens one of the most beautiful incidents in the Gospels. The guest has been received with all the courtesies of the East. They have not been withheld this time. Then Mary, the daughter of the host, whose past life probably no one but Jesus knows, approaches Jesus with an alabaster vase of ointment, this time spikenard and very costly. The nard, which weighed a pound, was a costly scent made from a plant which grows only on the mountain heights of northern India and was carried on camel-back through the passes of Afghanistan and across Persia into the Roman Empire. If Mary had anointed His head it would not have been so noticeable, but the fourth evangelist, writing late, says, "She anointed his feet." That was unusual, but there was something else far more unusual. With a quick gesture she pulls a ribbon which bound up her beautiful hair. The rippling tresses fell over her shoulders down to her knees. Then, kneeling down, she wiped the feet of Jesus with her hair. That must have shocked them terribly. Mary, now the sedate, good-living daughter of the host, has done a thing which would make every guest in the room regard her with suspicion as a prostitute. The atmosphere is electric. What *is* she doing? Though only Jesus could understand the lovely inwardness of the act, for He alone knew her

## IT HAPPENED IN PALESTINE

past life, it is clear to us now that she was reacting the scene of the previous feast in Northern Magdala, when, despised and hopeless, she had come to that other Simon's house, and, for the first time, found One who did not turn her away, who praised her love, who forgave her sins, and who, believing in her, restored her womanhood. Now, with richer ointment, the most expensive she can buy—for she is not a poor prostitute any longer—she anoints her Deliverer and wipes His feet. The wiping of His feet the second time seems to me significant. The first time her hot tears fell on His feet and she wiped them. If this second wiping was not of a special significance it seems strangely pointless. It would be unusual to wipe the feet after anointing with ointment. In the second story there is no weeping. The beautiful act, carried out at the sacrifice of her own feelings, signifies to Jesus, better than words, that she has not forgotten all that He has done for her. Her reputation was that she was possessed of seven devils. And now she is cleansed and healed and she wants Him to know that she does not forget. Further, she smashed the jar, thus making herself more unpopular still, because she, a Jewess, by smashing the jar, was following one of the customs of Rome. It was the Roman custom to break the flask that

## AT MAGDALA

held the ointment which was poured on the head of a friend who was dead, and to leave the flask in the place of burial. We notice the outcry. The guests are shocked already. The unbound hair, the use of the expensive ointment, and then a Jewess following the *Roman* custom ! It worked poor Judas up to a pitch of revolt. "Why has this ointment been wasted ?" he said, "it might have been sold for over fifteen pounds and the money given to the poor." Mary shrinks back distressed by the criticism, but Jesus defends her. "Leave her alone," He says. His quick, intuitive mind has realised, at once, the inwardness of her act. "Why do you trouble her ? She has done a lovely thing to Me." Notice that Jesus doesn't give her away. He loves the poetic act through which she speaks to Him. This is the only time when the Greek word  $\chi\alpha\lambdaός$  is used by the Gospel writers to convey the sense of an Aramaic word used by Jesus, a word meaning "beautiful" in the sense of "lovely" as well as noble. "She has perfumed My body ready for burial, and wherever the good news is told, then what this woman hath done shall be told as the memorial of her." The odour of the precious ointment filled Simon's house. By now its fragrant beauty has filled the world.

Here is one of the loveliest idylls in the New